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Hemans, Felicia 6

THE

VESPERS OF PALERMO;

A TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

MDCCCXXIII.

[Price Three Shillings.]

THE HISTORY OF THE

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES
Northumberland-court.

954
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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Count di Procida.

Raimond di Procida, *his Son.*

Eribert, *Viceroy.*

De Couci.

Montalba.

Guido.

Alberti.

Anselmo, a *Monk.*

Vittoria.

Constance, *Sister to Eribert.*

Mr. Young
Mr. C. Kimble
Mr. Bennett.
Mr. Baker
Mr. Yates

Mrs. Barker
Miss J. H. Kelly.

Nobles, Soldiers, Messengers, Vassals, Peasants, &c. &c.

Scene—Palermo.

M6017???

1917

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THE
VESPERS OF PALERMO;

A TRAGEDY.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.—*A Valley, with Vineyards and Cottages.*

*Groups of Peasants—Procida, disguised as a Pilgrim,
amongst them*

1 PEASANT. AY, this was wont to be a festal time
In days gone by! I can remember well
The old familiar melodies that rose
At break of morn, from all our purple hills,
To welcome in the vintage. Never since
Hath music seem'd so sweet! But the light hearts
Which to those measures beat so joyously
Are tamed to stillness now. There is no voice
Of joy thro' all the land.

2 PEA. Yes! there are sounds
Of revelry within the palaces,
And the fair castles of our ancient lords,
Where now the stranger banquets. Ye may hear,
From *thence* the peals of song and laughter rise
At midnight's deepest hour.

3 PEA.

Alas ! we sat

In happier days, so peacefully beneath
 The olives and the vines our fathers rear'd,
 Encircled by our children, whose quick steps
 Flew by us in the dance ! The time hath been
 When peace was in the hamlet, wheresoe'er
 The storm might gather. But this yoke of France
 Falls on the peasant's neck as heavily
 As on the crested chieftain's. We are bow'd
 E'en to the earth.

PEA. CHILD.

My father, tell me when

Shall the gay dance and song again resound
 Amidst our chesnut-woods, as in those days
 Of which thou 'rt wont to tell the joyous tale ?

1 PEA. When there are light and reckless hearts
 once more

In Sicily's green vales. Alas ! my boy,
 Men meet not now to quaff the flowing bowl,
 To hear the mirthful song, and cast aside
 The weight of work-day care :—they meet, to
 speak
 Of wrongs and sorrows, and to whisper thoughts
 They dare not breathe aloud.

PROCIDA. (*from the back-ground.*) Ay, it is well
 So to relieve th' o'erburden'd heart, which pants
 Beneath its weight of wrongs ; but better far
 In silence to avenge them.

AN OLD PEA.

What deep voice

Came with that startling tone ?

1 PEA.

It was our guest's,

The stranger pilgrim, who hath sojourn'd here
Since yester-morn. Good neighbours, mark him well:
He hath a stately bearing, and an eye
Whose glance looks thro' the heart. His mien accords
Ill with such vestments. How he folds round him
His pilgrim-cloak, e'en as it were a robe
Of knightly ermine! That commanding step
Should have been used in courts and camps to move.
Mark him!

OLD PEA. Nay, rather, mark him not: the times
Are fearful, and they teach the boldest hearts
A cautious lesson. What should bring him here?

A YOUTH. He spoke of vengeance!

OLD PEA. Peace! we are beset
By snares on every side, and we must learn
In silence and in patience to endure.
Talk not of vengeance, for the word is death.

PRO. (*coming forward indignantly.*)—The word is
death! And what hath life for *thee*,
That thou shouldst cling to it thus? thou abject thing!
Whose very soul is moulded to the yoke,
And stamp'd with servitude. What! is it life,
Thus at a breeze to start, to school thy voice
Into low fearful whispers, and to cast
Pale jealous looks around thee, lest, e'en then,
Strangers should catch its echo?—Is there aught
In *this* so precious, that thy furrow'd cheek
Is blanch'd with terror at the passing thought
Of hazarding some few and evil days,
Which drag thus poorly on?

SOME OF THE PEASANTS. Away, away!
Leave us, for there is danger in thy presence.

PRO. Why, what is danger?—Are there deeper ills
Than those ye bear thus calmly? Ye have drain'd
The cup of bitterness, till nought remains
To fear or shrink from—therefore, be ye strong!
Power dwelleth with despair.—Why start ye thus
At words which are but echoes of the thoughts
Lock'd in your secret souls?—Full well I know,
There is not one amongst you, but hath nursed
Some proud indignant feeling, which doth make
One conflict of his life. I know *thy* wrongs,
And thine—and thine,—but if within your breasts,
There is no chord that vibrates to *my* voice,
Then fare ye well.

A YOUTH. (*coming forward.*) No, no! say on, say on!
There are still free and fiery hearts e'en here,
That kindle at thy words.

PEAS. If that indeed:
Thou hast a hope to give us.

PRO. There is hope
For all who suffer with indignant thoughts
Which work in silent strength. What! think ye
Heaven

O'erlooks th' oppressor, if he bear awhile
His crested head on high?—I tell you, no!
Th' avenger will not sleep. It was an hour
Of triumph to the conqueror, when our king,
Our young brave Conradin, in life's fair morn,
On the red scaffold died. Yet not the less

Is justice throned above ; and her good time
Comes rushing on in storms : that royal blood
Hath lifted an accusing voice from earth,
And hath been heard. The traces of the past
Fade in *man's* heart, but ne'er doth heaven forget.

PEAS. Had we but arms and leaders, we are men
Who might earn vengeance yet ; but wanting these,
What would'st thou have us do ?

PRO. Be vigilant ;
And when the signal wakes the land, arise !
The peasant's arm is strong, and there shall be
A rich and noble harvest. Fare ye well. [*Exit Procida.*]

1 PEAS. This man should be a prophet : how he seem'd
To read our hearts with his dark searching glance
And aspect of command ! And yet his garb
Is mean as ours.

2 PEAS. Speak low ; I know him well.
At first his voice disturb'd me like a dream
Of other days ; but I remember now
His form, seen oft when in my youth I served
Beneath the banners of our kings. 'Tis he
Who hath been exiled and proscribed so long,
The Count di Procida.

PEAS. And is this he ?
Then heaven protect him ! for around his steps
Will many snares be set.

1 PEAS. He comes not thus
But with some mighty purpose ; doubt it not.
Perchance to bring us freedom. He is one,
Whose faith, thro' many a trial, hath been proved

True to our native princes. But away!
The noon-tide heat is past, and from the seas
Light gales are wandering thro' the vineyards; now
We may resume our toil.

[*Exeunt Peasants.*]

SCENE II.—*The Terrace of a Castle.*

Eribert. Vittoria.

VITTORIA. Have I not told thee, that I bear a heart
Blighted and cold?—Th' affections of my youth
Lie slumbering in the grave; their fount is closed,
And all the soft and playful tenderness
Which hath its home in woman's breast, ere yet
Deep wrongs have sear'd it; all is fled from mine.
Urge me no more.

ERIBERT. O lady! doth the flower
That sleeps entomb'd thro' the long wintry storms
Unfold its beauty to the breath of spring;
And shall not woman's heart, from chill despair,
Wake at love's voice?

VIT. Love!—make *love's* name thy spell,
And I am strong!—the very word calls up
From the dark past, thoughts, feelings, powers, array'd
In arms against thee!—Know'st thou *whom* I lov'd,
While my soul's dwelling place was still on earth?
One who was born for empire, and endow'd
With such high gifts of princely majesty,
As bow'd all hearts before him!—Was he not
Brave, royal, beautiful?—And such he died;

He died!—hast thou forgotten?—And thou’rt here,
Thou meet’st my glance with eyes which coldly look’d,
—Coldly!—nay, rather with triumphant gaze,
Upon his murder!—Desolate as I am,
Yet in the mien of *thine* affianced bride,
Oh, my lost Conradin! there should be still
Somewhat of loftiness, which might o’erawe
The hearts of thine assassins.

ERI.

Haughty dame!

If thy proud heart to tenderness be closed,
Know, danger is around thee: thou hast foes
That seek thy ruin, and my power alone
Can shield thee from their arts.

VIT.

Provençal, tell

Thy tale of danger to some happy heart,
Which hath its little world of loved ones round,
For whom to tremble; and its tranquil joys
That make earth, Paradise. I stand alone;
—They that are blest may fear.

ERI.

Is there not one

Who ne’er commands in vain?—proud lady, bend
Thy spirit to thy fate; for know that he,
Whose car of triumph in its earthquake path
O’er the bow’d neck of prostrate Sicily,
Hath borne him to dominion; he, my king,
Charles of Anjou, decrees thy hand the boon
My deeds have well deserved; and who hath power
Against his mandates?

VIT.

Viceroy, tell thy lord,
That e’en where chains lie heaviest on the land,

Souls may not all be fetter'd. Oft, ere now,
 Conquerors have rock'd the earth, yet fail'd to tame
 Unto their purposes, that restless fire,
 Inhabiting man's breast.—A spark bursts forth,
 And so they perish!—'tis the fate of those
 Who sport with lightning—and it may be his:
 —Tell him I fear him not, and thus am free.

ERI. 'Tis well. Then nerve that lofty heart to bear
 The wrath which is not powerless. Yet again
 Bethink thee, lady!—Love may change—*hath* changed
 To vigilant hatred oft, whose sleepless eye
 Still finds what most it seeks for. Fare thee well.
 —Look to it yet!—To-morrow I return.

[Exit Eriberit.]

VIT. To-morrow!—Some ere now have slept, and
 dreamt

Of morrows which ne'er dawn'd—or ne'er for them;
 So silently their deep and still repose
 Hath melted into death!—Are there not balms
 In nature's boundless realm, to pour out sleep
 Like this, on me?—Yet should my spirit still
 Endure its earthly bonds, till it could bear
 To *his* a glorious tale of his own isle,
 Free and avenged,—*Thou* should'st be now at
 work,

In wrath, my native Etna! who dost lift
 Thy spiry pillar of dark smoke so high,
 Thro' the red heaven of sunset!—sleep'st thou still,
 With all thy founts of fire, while spoilers tread
 The glowing vales beneath?

(*Procida enters disguised.*)

Ha ! who art thou,
Unbidden guest, that with so mute a step
Dost steal upon me ?

PRO. One, o'er whom hath pass'd
All that can change man's aspect !—Yet not long
Shalt thou find safety in forgetfulness.

—I am he, to breathe whose name is perilous,
Unless thy wealth could bribe the winds to silence.

—Know'st thou *this*, lady ?— (*He shows a ring.*)

VIT. Righteous Heaven ! the pledge
Amidst his people from the scaffold thrown
By him who perish'd, and whose kingly blood
E'en yet is unatoned.—My heart beats high—
—Oh, welcome, welcome ! thou art Procida,
Th' Avenger, the Deliverer !

PRO. Call me so
When my great task is done. Yet who can tell
If the return'd *be* welcome ?—Many a heart
Is changed since last we met.

VIT. Why dost thou gaze,
With such a still and solemn earnestness,
Upon my alter'd mien ?

PRO. That I may read
If to the widow'd love of Conradin,
Or the proud Eribert's triumphant bride,
I now entrust my fate.

VIT. Thou, Procida !
That *thou* shouldst wrong me thus !—Prolong thy gaze
Till it hath found an answer.

PRO. 'Tis enough.

I find it in thy cheek, whose rapid change
Is from death's hue to fever's ; in the wild
Unsettled brightness of thy proud dark eye,
And in thy wasted form. Ay, 'tis a deep
And solemn joy, thus in thy looks to trace,
Instead of youth's gay bloom, the characters
Of noble suffering ;—on thy brow the same
Commanding spirit holds its native state
Which could not stoop to vileness. Yet the
voice

Of Fame hath told afar that thou shouldst wed
This tyrant, Eribert.

VIT. And told it not

A tale of insolent love repell'd with scorn,
Of stern commands and fearful menaces
Met with indignant courage ?—Procida !
It was but now that haughtily I braved
His sovereign's mandate, which decrees my hand,
With its fair appanage of wide domains
And wealthy vassals, a most fitting boon,
To recompense his crimes.—I smiled—ay, smiled—
In proud security ! for the high of heart
Have still a pathway to escape disgrace,
Tho' it be dark and lone.

PRO. Thou shalt not need

To tread its shadowy mazes. Trust my words :
I tell thee, that a spirit is abroad,
Which will not slumber till its path be traced
By deeds of fearful fame. Vittoria, live !

It is most meet that thou *shouldst* live, to see
The mighty expiation ; for thy heart
(Forgive me that I wrong'd its faith) hath nursed
A high, majestic grief, whose seal is set
Deep on thy marble brow.

VIT. Then thou *canst* tell,
By gazing on the wither'd rose, that there
Time, or the blight, hath work'd !—Ay, this is in
Thy vision's scope : but oh ! the things unseen,
Untold, undreamt of, which like shadows pass
Hourly o'er that mysterious world, a mind
To ruin struck by grief !—Yet doth my soul,
Far, midst its darkness, nurse one soaring hope,
Wherein is bright vitality.—'Tis to see
His blood avenged, and his fair heritage,
My beautiful native land, in glory risen,
Like a warrior from his slumbers !

PRO. Hear'st thou not
With what a deep and ominous moan, the voice
Of our great mountain swells ?—There will be soon
A fearful burst !—Vittoria ! brood no more
In silence o'er thy sorrows, but go forth
Amidst thy vassals, (yet be secret still)
And let thy breath give nurture to the spark
Thou 'lt find already kindled. I move on
In shadow, yet awakening in my path
That which shall startle nations. Fare thee well.

VIT. When shall we meet again ?—Are we not
those

Whom most he loved on earth, and think'st thou not
That love e'en yet shall bring his spirit near
 While thus we hold communion?

PRO. Yes, I feel
 Its breathing influence whilst I look on thee,
 Who wert its light in life. Yet will we not
 Make womanish tears our offering on his tomb;
 He shall have nobler tribute!—I must hence,
 But thou shalt soon hear more. Await the time.

[Exeunt separately.]

SCENE III.—*The Sea Shore.*

Raimond di Procida. Constance.

CONSTANCE. There is a shadow far within your eye,
 Which hath of late been deepening. You were wont
 Upon the clearness of your open brow
 To wear a brighter spirit, shedding round
 Joy, like our southern sun. It is not well,
 If some dark thought be gathering o'er your soul,
 To hide it from affection. Why is this,
 My Raimond, why is this?

RAIMOND. Oh! from the dreams
 Of youth, sweet Constance, hath not manhood still
 A wild and stormy wakening?—They depart,
 Light after light, our glorious visions fade,
 The vaguely beautiful! till earth, unveil'd
 Lies pale around; and life's realities
 Press on the soul, from its unfathom'd depth

Rousing the fiery feelings, and proud thoughts,
In all their fearful strength!—'Tis ever thus,
And doubly so with me ; for I awoke
With high aspirings, making it a curse
To breathe where noble minds are bow'd, as here.
—To breathe!—it is not breath !

CON. I know thy grief,
—And is't not mine ?—for those devoted men
Doom'd with their life to expiate some wild word,
Born of the social hour. Oh ! I have knelt,
E'en at my brother's feet, with fruitless tears,
Imploring him to spare. His heart is shut
Against my voice ; yet will I not forsake
The cause of mercy.

RAI. Waste not thou thy prayers,
Oh, gentle love, for them. There's little need
For Pity, tho' the galling chain be worn
By some few slaves the less. Let them depart !
There is a world beyond th' oppressor's reach,
And thither lies their way.

CON. Alas ! I see
That some new wrong hath pierced you to the soul.

RAI. Pardon, beloved Constance, if my words,
From feelings hourly stung, have caught, perchance,
A tone of bitterness.—Oh ! when thine eyes,
With their sweet eloquent thoughtfulness, are fix'd
Thus tenderly on mine, I should forget
All else in their soft beams ; and yet I came
To tell thee—

CON. What? What wouldst thou say? O
speak!—

Thou wouldst not leave me!

RAI. I have cast a cloud,
The shadow of dark thoughts and ruin'd fortunes,
O'er thy bright spirit. Haply, were I gone,
Thou wouldst resume thyself, and dwell once more
In the clear sunny light of youth and joy,
E'en as before we met—before we loved!

CON. This is but mockery.—Well thou know'st
thy love
Hath given me nobler being; made my heart
A home for all the deep sublimities
Of strong affection; and I would not change
Th' exalted life I draw from that pure source,
With all its checquer'd hues of hope and fear,
Ev'n for the brightest calm. Thou most unkind!
Have I deserved this?

RAI. Oh! thou hast deserved
A love less fatal to thy peace than mine.
Think not 'tis mockery!—But I cannot rest
To be the scorn'd and trampled thing I am
In this degraded land. Its very skies,
That smile as if but festivals were held
Beneath their cloudless azure, weigh me down
With a dull sense of bondage, and I pine
For freedom's charter'd air. I would go forth
To seek my noble father; he hath been
Too long a lonely exile, and his name

Seems fading in the dim obscurity
Which gathers round my fortunes.

CON. Must we part?

And is it come to this?—Oh! I have still
Deem'd it enough of joy with *thee* to share
E'en grief itself—and now—but this is vain;
Alas! too deep, too fond, is woman's love,
Too full of hope, she casts on troubled waves
The treasures of her soul!

RAI. Oh, speak not thus !

Thy gentle and desponding tones fall cold
Upon my inmost heart.—I leave thee but
To be more worthy of a love like thine.
For I have dreamt of fame !—A few short years,
And we may yet be blest.

CON. A few short years !

Less time may well suffice for death and fate
To work all change on earth !—To break the ties
Which early love had form'd ; and to bow down
Th' elastic spirit, and to blight each flower
Strewn in life's crowded path !—But be it so ?
Be it enough to know that happiness
Meets thee on other shores.

RAI. Where'er I roam

Thou shalt be with my soul!—Thy soft low voice
Shall rise upon remembrance, like a strain
Of music heard in boyhood, bringing back
Life's morning freshness.—Oh ! that there should be
Things, which we love with such deep tenderness,
But, through that love, to learn how much of woe

Dwells in one hour like this!—Yet weep thou not!
 We shall meet soon; and many days, dear love,
 Ere I depart.

CON. Then there's a respite still.

Days!—not a day but in its course may bring
 Some strange vicissitude to turn aside
 Th' impending blow we shrink from.—Fare thee well!

(*returning.*)

—Oh, Raimond! this is not our *last* farewell?
 Thou wouldst not so deceive me?

RAI. Doubt me not,
 Gentlest and best beloved! we meet again.

[*Exit Constance.*]

RAI. (*After a pause.*) When shall I breathe in
 freedom, and give scope

To those untameable and burning thoughts,
 And restless aspirations, which consume
 My heart i' th' land of bondage?—Oh! with you,
 Ye everlasting images of power,
 And of infinity! thou blue-rolling deep,
 And you, ye stars! whose beams are characters
 Wherewith the oracles of fate are traced;
 With you my soul finds room, and casts aside
 The weight that doth oppress her.—But my thoughts
 Are wandering far; there should be one to share
 This awful and majestic solitude
 Of sea and heaven with me.

(*Procida enters unobserved.*)

It is the hour

He named, and yet he comes not.

PROCIDA. (*Coming forward*) He is here.

RAI. Now, thou mysterious stranger, thou, whose
glance

Doth fix itself on memory, and pursue
Thought, like a spirit, haunting its lone hours ;
Reveal thyself ; what art thou ?

PRO. One, whose life

Hath been a troubled stream, and made its way
Through rocks and darkness, and a thousand storms,
With still a mighty aim.—But now the shades
Of eve are gathering round me, and I come
To this, my native land, that I may rest
Beneath its vines in peace.

RAI. Seek'st thou for peace ?

This is no land of peace ; unless that deep
And voiceless terror, which doth freeze men's thoughts
Back to their source, and mantle its pale mien
With a dull hollow semblance of repose,
May so be call'd.

PRO. There are such calms full oft
Preceding earthquakes. But I have not been
So vainly school'd by fortune, and inured
To shape my course on peril's dizzy brink,
That it should irk my spirit to put on
Such guise of hush'd submissiveness as best
May suit the troubled aspect of the times.

RAI. Why, then, thou art welcome, stranger ! to
the land

Where most disguise is needful.—He were bold
Who now should wear his thoughts upon his brow

Beneath Sicilian skies. The brother's eye
 Doth search distrustfully the brother's face ;
 And friends, whose undivided lives have drawn
 From the same past, their long remembrances,
 Now meet in terror, or no more ; lest hearts
 Full to o'erflowing, in their social hour,
 Should pour out some rash word, which roving winds
 Might whisper to our conquerors.—This it is,
 To wear a foreign yoke.

PRO. It matters not
 To him who holds the mastery o'er his spirit,
 And can suppress its workings, till endurance
 Becomes as nature. We can tame ourselves
 To all extremes, and there is that in life
 To which we cling with most tenacious grasp,
 Ev'n when its lofty claims are all reduced
 To the poor common privilege of breathing.—
 Why dost thou turn away ?

RAL. What would'st thou with me ?
 I deem'd thee, by th' ascendant soul which liv'd,
 And made its throne on thy commanding brow,
 One of a sovereign nature, which would scorn
 So to abase its high capacities
 For aught on earth.—But thou art like the rest.
 What would'st thou with me ?

PRO. I would counsel thee.
 Thou must do that which men—ay, valiant men,—
 Hourly submit to do ; in the proud court,
 And in the stately camp, and at the board
 Of midnight revellers, whose flush'd mirth is all

A strife, won hardly.—Where is he, whose heart
Lies bare, thro' all its foldings, to the gaze
Of mortal eye?—If vengeance wait the foe,
Or fate th' oppressor, 'tis in depths conceal'd
Beneath a smiling surface.—Youth ! I say
Keep thy soul down !—Put on a mask !—'tis worn
Alike by power and weakness, and the smooth
And specious intercourse of life requires
Its aid in every scene.

RAI. Away, dissembler !
Life hath its high and its ignoble tasks,
Fitted to every nature. Will the free
And royal eagle stoop to learn the arts
By which the serpent wins his spell-bound prey ?
It is because I *will* not clothe myself
In a vile garb of coward semblances,
That now, e'en now, I struggle with my heart,
To bid what most I love a long farewell,
And seek my country on some distant shore,
Where such things are unknown !

PRO. (*exultingly.*) Why, this is joy !
After long conflict with the doubts and fears,
And the poor subtleties of meaner minds,
To meet a spirit, whose bold elastic wing
Oppression hath not crush'd.—High-hearted youth !
Thy father, should his footsteps e'er again
Visit these shores—

RAI. My father ! what of him ?
Speak ! was he known to thee ?

PRO. In distant lands.

With him I've traversed many a wild, and look'd
On many a danger; and the thought that thou
Wert smiling then in peace, a happy boy,
Oft thro' the storm hath cheer'd him.

RAI. Dost thou deem
That still he lives?—Oh! if it be in chains,
In woe, in poverty's obscurest cell,
Say but he lives—and I will track his steps
E'en to earth's verge!

PRO. It may be that he lives:
Tho' long his name hath ceased to be a word
Familiar in man's dwellings. But its sound
May yet be heard!—Raimond di Procida,
—Rememberest thou thy father?

RAI. From my mind
His form hath faded long, for years have pass'd
Since he went forth to exile: but a vague,
Yet powerful, image of deep majesty,
Still dimly gathering round each thought of him,
Doth claim instinctive reverence; and my love
For his inspiring name hath long become
Part of my being.

PRO. Raimond! doth no voice
Speak to thy soul, and tell thee whose the arms
That would enfold thee now?—My son! my son!

RAI. Father!—Oh God!—my father! Now I know
Why my heart woke before thee!

PRO. Oh! this hour
Makes hope, reality; for thou art all
My dreams had pictured thee!

RAI. Yet why so long,
 Ev'n as a stranger, hast thou cross'd my paths,
 One nameless and unknown?—and yet I felt
 Each pulse within me thrilling to thy voice.

PRO. Because I would not link thy fate with mine,
 Till I could hail the day-spring of that hope
 Which now is gathering round us.—Listen, youth!
 Thou hast told me of a subdued, and scorn'd,
 And trampled land, whose very soul is bow'd
 And fashion'd to her chains:—but I tell thee
 Of a most generous and devoted land,
 A land of kindling energies: a land
 Of glorious recollections!—proudly true
 To the high memory of her ancient kings,
 And rising, in majestic scorn, to cast
 Her alien bondage off!

RAI. And where is this?

PRO. Here, in our isle, our own fair Sicily!
 Her spirit is awake, and moving on,
 In its deep silence mightier, to regain
 Her place amongst the nations; and the hour
 Of that tremendous effort is at hand.

RAI. Can it be thus indeed?—Thou pour'st new life
 Thro' all my burning veins!—I am as one
 Awakening from a chill and death-like sleep
 To the full glorious day.

PRO. Thou shalt hear more!
 Thou shalt hear things which would,—which *will* arouse
 The proud, free spirits of our ancestors
 E'en from their marble rest. Yet mark me well!

Be secret !—for along my destin'd path
I yet must darkly move.—Now, follow me ;
And join a band of men, in whose high hearts
There lies a nation's strength.

RAI. My noble father !
Thy words have given me all for which I pined—
An aim, a hope, a purpose !—And the blood
Doth rush in warmer currents thro' my veins,
As a bright fountain from its icy bonds
By the quick sun-stroke freed.

PRO. Ay, this is well !
Such natures burst men's chains !—Now, follow me.
[*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE I.—*Apartment in a Palace.*

Eribert. Constance.

CONSTANCE. Will you not hear me?—Oh! that they
who need

Hourly forgiveness, they who do but live,
While Mercy's voice, beyond th' eternal stars,
Wins the great Judge to listen, should be thus,
In their vain exercise of pageant power,
Hard and relentless!—Gentle brother, yet,
'Tis in your choice to imitate that heaven
Whose noblest joy is pardon.

ERIBERT.

'Tis too late.

You have a soft and moving voice, which pleads
With eloquent melody—but they must die.

CON. What, die!—for words?—for breath, which
leaves no trace

To sully the pure air, wherewith it blends,
And is, being utter'd, gone?—Why, 't were enough
For such a venial fault, to be deprived
One little day of man's free heritage,
Heaven's warm and sunny light!—Oh! if you deem
That evil harbours in their souls, at least

Delay the stroke, till guilt, made manifest,
Shall bid stern Justice wake.

ERI. I am not one
Of those weak spirits, that timorously keep watch
For fair occasions, thence to borrow hues
Of virtue for their deeds. My school hath been
Where power sits crown'd and arm'd.—And, mark
me, sister!

To a distrustful nature it might seem
Strange, that your lips thus earnestly should plead
For these Sicilian rebels. O'er my being
Suspicion holds no power.—And yet take note.
—I have said, and they must die.

CON. Have you no fear?

ERI. Of what?—that heaven should fall?

CON. No!—but that earth
Should arm in madness.—Brother! I have seen
Dark eyes bent on you, e'en midst festal throngs,
With such deep hatred settled in their glance,
My heart hath died within me.

ERI. Am I then

To pause, and doubt, and shrink, because a girl,
A dreaming girl, hath trembled at a look?

CON. Oh! looks are no illusions, when the soul,
Which may not speak in words, can find no way
But theirs, to liberty!—Have not these men
Brave sons, or noble brothers?

ERI. Yes! whose name

It rests with me to make a word of fear,
A sound forbidden midst the haunts of men.

CON. But not forgotten!—Ah! beware, beware!
 —Nay, look not sternly on me.—There is one
 Of that devoted band, who yet will need
 Years to be ripe for death.—He is a youth,
 A very boy, on whose unshaded cheek
 The spring-time glow is lingering. 'Twas but now
 His mother left me, with a timid hope
 Just dawning in her breast;—and I—I dared
 To foster its faint spark.—You smile!—Oh! then
 He will be saved!

ERI. Nay, I but smiled to think
 What a fond fool is hope!—She may be taught
 To deem that the great sun will change his course
 To work her pleasure; or the tomb give back
 Its inmates to her arms.—In sooth, 'tis strange!
 Yet, with your pitying heart, you should not thus
 Have mock'd the boy's sad mother—I have said,
 You should not thus have *mock'd* her!—Now, farewell.

[*Exit Eribert!*]

CON. Oh, brother! hard of heart!—for deeds like
 these
 There must be fearful chastening, if on high
 Justice doth hold her state.—And I must tell
 You desolate mother that her fair young son
 Is thus to perish!—Haply the dread tale
 May slay *her* too—for heaven is merciful.
 —'Twill be a bitter task!

[*Exit Constance.*]

SCENE II.—*A ruined Tower, surrounded by Woods.*

PROCIDA.—Vittoria.

PROCIDA. Thy vassals are prepared then?

VITTORIA. Yes, they wait

Thy summons to their task.

PRO. Keep the flame bright,
But hidden, till its hour.—Wouldst thou dare, lady,
To join our councils at the night's mid-watch,
In the lone cavern by the rock-hewn cross?

VIT. What should I shrink from?

PRO. Oh! the forest-paths
Are dim and wild, e'en when the sunshine streams
Thro' their high arches: but when powerful night
Comes, with her cloudy phantoms, and her pale
Uncertain moonbeams, and the hollow sounds
Of her mysterious winds; their aspect *then*
Is of another and more fearful world;
A realm of indistinct and shadowy forms,
Wakening strange thoughts, almost too much for this,
Our frail terrestrial nature.

VIT. Well I know
All this, and more. Such scenes have been th'
abodes

Where thro' the silence of my soul have pass'd
Voices, and visions from the sphere of those
That have to die no more!—Nay, doubt it not!
If such unearthly intercourse hath e'er
Been granted to our nature, 'tis to hearts

Whose love is with the dead. They, they alone,
 Unmadden'd could sustain the fearful joy
 And glory of its trances!—at the hour
 Which makes guilt tremulous, and peoples earth
 And air with infinite, viewless multitudes,
 I will be with thee, Procida.

PRO. Thy presence
 Will kindle nobler thoughts, and, in the souls
 Of suffering and indignant men, arouse
 That which may strengthen our majestic cause
 With yet a deeper power.—Know'st thou the spot?

VIT. Full well. There is no scene so wild and
 lone
 In these dim woods, but I have visited
 Its tangled shades.

PRO. At midnight then we meet.
 [Exit Procida.

VIT. Why should I fear?—Thou wilt be with me,
 thou,
 Th' immortal dream and shadow of my soul,
 Spirit of him I love! that meet'st me still
 In loneliness and silence; in the noon
 Of the wild night, and in the forest-depths,
 Known but to me; for whom thou giv'st the winds
 And sighing leaves a cadence of thy voice,
 Till my heart faints with that o'erthrilling joy!
 —Thou wilt be with me there, and lend my lips
 Words, fiery words, to flush dark cheeks with shame,
 That thou art unavenged!

[Exit Vittoria.

But listen!—I drew near my own far home;
There was no light along its walls, no sound
SCENE III.—*A Chapel, with a Monument, on which is
laid a Sword.—Moonlight.*

PROCIDA. Raimond. Montalba.

MONTALBA. And know you not my story?

PROCIDA. In the lands,
Where I have been a wanderer, your deep wrongs
Were number'd with our country's; but their tale
Came only in faint echoes to mine ear:
I would fain hear it now.

MON. Hark! while you spoke,
There was a voice-like murmur in the breeze,
Which ev'n like death came o'er me:—'twas a night
Like this, of clouds contending with the moon,
A night of sweeping winds, of rustling leaves,
And swift wild shadows floating o'er the earth,
Clothed with a phantom-life; when, after years
Of battle and captivity, I spurr'd
My good steed homewards.—Oh! what lovely dreams
Rose on my spirit!—There were tears and smiles,
But all of joy!—And there were bounding steps,
And clinging arms, whose passionate clasp of love
Doth twine so fondly round the warrior's neck,
When his plumed helm is doff'd.—Hence, feeble
thoughts!

—I am sterner now, yet once such dreams were mine!

RAIMOND. And were they realiz'd?

MON. Youth! Ask me not,

But listen!—I drew near my own fair home ;
 There was no light along its walls, no sound
 Of bugle pealing from the watch-tower's height
 At my approach, although my trampling steed
 Made the earth ring ; yet the wide gates were thrown
 All open.—Then my heart misgave me first,
 And on the threshold of my silent hall
 I paused a moment, and the wind swept by
 With the same deep and dirge-like tone which pierced
 My soul e'en now.—I call'd—my struggling voice
 Gave utterance to my wife's, my children's, names ;
 They answer'd not—I roused my failing strength,
 And wildly rush'd within—and they were there.

RAI. And was all well?

MON. Ay, well!—for death is well,
 And they were all at rest!—I see them yet,
 Pale in their innocent beauty, which had fail'd
 To stay th' assassin's arm!

RAI. Oh, righteous heaven!
 Who had done this?

MON. Who!

PRO. Can'st thou question, *who*?
 Whom hath the earth to perpetrate such deeds,
 In the cold-blooded revelry of crime,
 But those whose yoke is on us?

RAI. Man of woe!
 What words hath pity for despair like thine?

MON. Pity!—fond youth!—My soul disdains the
 grief

Which doth unbosom its deep secrecies,

To ask a vain companionship of tears,
And so to be relieved!

PRO. For woes like these,
There is no sympathy but vengeance.

MON. None!
Therefore I brought you hither, that your hearts
Might catch the spirit of the scene!—Look round!
We are in the awful presence of the dead;
Within yon tomb *they* sleep, whose gentle blood
Weighs down the murderer's soul.—*They* sleep!—but I
Am wakeful o'er their dust!—I laid my sword,
Without its sheath, on their sepulchral stone,
As on an altar; and th' eternal stars,
And heaven, and night, bore witness to my vow,
No more to wield it save in one great cause,
The vengeance of the grave!—And now the hour
Of that atonement comes!

(He takes the sword from the tomb.)

RAI. My spirit burns!
And my full heart almost to bursting swells.
—Oh! for the day of battle!

PRO. Raimond! they
Whose souls are dark with guiltless blood must die;
—But not in battle.

RAI. How, my father!

PRO. No!
Look on that sepulchre, and it will teach
Another lesson.—But th' appointed hour
Advances.—Thou wilt join our chosen band,
Noble Montalba?

MON. Leave me for a time,
That I may calm my soul by intercourse
With the still dead, before I mix with men,
And with their passions. I have nursed for years,
In silence and in solitude, the flame
Which doth consume me; and it is not used
Thus to be look'd or breath'd on.—Procida!
I would be tranquil—or appear so—ere
I join your brave confederates. Thro' my heart
There struck a pang—but it will soon have pass'd.

PRO. Remember!—in the cavern by the cross.
Now, follow me, my son.

[*Exeunt Procida and Raimond.*

MON. (*after a pause, leaning on the tomb.*)
Said he, “my son?”—Now, why should this man's
life
Go down in hope, thus resting on a son,
And I be desolate?—How strange a sound
Was that—“my son!”—I had a boy, who might
Have worn as free a soul upon his brow
As doth this youth.—Why should the thought of him
Thus haunt me?—when I tread the peopled ways
Of life again, I shall be pass'd each hour
By fathers with their children, and I must
Learn calmly to look on.—Methinks 'twere now
A gloomy consolation to behold
All men bereft, as I am!—But away,
Vain thoughts!—One task is left for blighted hearts,
And it shall be fulfill'd.

[*Exit Montalba.*

SCENE IV.—*Entrance of a Cave, surrounded by Rocks and Forests. A rude Cross seen amongst the Rocks.*

PROCIDA. Raimond.

PROCIDA. And it is thus, beneath the solemn skies
Of midnight, and in solitary caves,
Where the wild forest-creatures make their lair,—
Is't thus the chiefs of Sicily must hold
The councils of their country!

RAIMOND. Why, such scenes
In their primeval majesty, beheld
Thus by faint starlight, and the partial glare
Of the red-streaming lava, will inspire
Far deeper thoughts than pillar'd halls, wherein
Statesmen hold weary vigils.—Are we not
O'ershadow'd by that Etna, which of old
With its dread prophecies, hath struck dismay
Thro' tyrants' hearts, and bade them seek a home
In other climes?—Hark! from its depths e'en now
What hollow moans are sent!

Enter Montalba, Guido, and other Sicilians.

PRO. Welcome, my brave associates!—We can share
The wolf's wild freedom here!—Th' oppressor's
haunt
Is not midst rocks and caves. Are we all met?

SICILIANS. All, all!

PRO. The torchlight, sway'd by every gust,
But dimly shows your features.—Where is he

Who from his battles had return'd to breathe
 Once more, without a corslet, and to meet
 The voices, and the footsteps, and the smiles,
 Blent with his dreams of home?—Of that dark tale
 The rest is known to vengeance!—Art thou here,
 With thy deep wrongs and resolute despair,
 Childless Montalba?

MON. (*advancing.*) He is at thy side.
 Call on that desolate father, in the hour
 When his revenge is nigh.

PRO. Thou, too, come forth,
 From thine own halls an exile!—Dost thou make
 The mountain-fastnesses thy dwelling still,
 While hostile banners, o'er thy rampart walls,
 Wave their proud blazonry?

I SICIL. Even so. I stood
 Last night before my own ancestral towers
 An unknown outcast, while the tempest beat
 On my bare head—what reck'd it?—There was joy
 Within, and revelry; the festive lamps
 Were streaming from each turret, and gay songs,
 I 'th' stranger's tongue, made mirth. They little
 deem'd

Who heard their melodies!—but there are thoughts
 Best nurtured in the wild; there are dread vows
 Known to the mountain-echoes.—Procida!
 Call on the outcast when revenge is nigh.

PRO. I knew a young Sicilian, one whose heart
 Should be all fire. On that most guilty day,
 When, with our martyr'd Conradin, the flower

Of the land's knighthood perish'd ; he, of whom
 I speak, a weeping boy, whose innocent tears
 Melted a thousand hearts that dared not aid,
 Stood by the scaffold, with extended arms,
 Calling upon his father, whose last look
 Turn'd full on him its parting agony.
 That father's blood gush'd o'er him !—and the boy
 Then dried his tears, and, with a kindling eye,
 And a proud flush on his young cheek, look'd up
 To the bright heaven.—Doth he remember still
 That bitter hour ?

2 SICIL. He bears a sheathless sword !
 —Call on the orphan when revenge is nigh.

PRO. Our band shows gallantly—but there are men
 Who should be with us now, had they not dared
 In some wild moment of festivity
 To give their full hearts way, and breathe a wish
 For freedom !—and some traitor—it might be
 A breeze perchance—bore the forbidden sound
 To Eribert :—so they must die—unless
 Fate, (who at times is wayward) should select
 Some other victim first !—But have they not
 Brothers or sons amongst us ?

GUIDO. Look on me !
 I have a brother, a young high-soul'd boy,
 And beautiful as a sculptor's dream, with brow
 That wears, amidst its dark rich curls, the stamp
 Of inborn nobleness. In truth, he is
 A glorious creature !—But his doom is seal'd
 With their's of whom you spoke ; and I have knelt—

—Ay, scorn me not ! 'twas for his life—I knelt
E'en at the viceroy's feet, and he put on
That heartless laugh of cold malignity
We know so well, and spurn'd me.—But the stain
Of shame like this, takes blood to wash it off,
And *thus* it shall be cancell'd !—Call on me,
When the stern moment of revenge is nigh.

PRO. I call upon thee *now* ! The land's high soul
Is roused, and moving onward, like a breeze
Or a swift sunbeam, kindling nature's hues
To deeper life before it. In his chains,
The peasant dreams of freedom !—ay, 'tis thus
Oppression fans th' imperishable flame
With most unconscious hands.—No praise be her's
For what she blindly works !—When slavery's cup
O'erflows its bounds, the creeping poison, meant
To dull our senses, thro' each burning vein
Pours fever, lending a delirious strength
To burst man's fetters—and they *shall* be burst !
I have hoped, when hope seemed frenzy ; but a power
Abides in human will, when bent with strong
Unswerving energy on one great aim,
To make and rule its fortunes !—I have been
A wanderer in the fulness of my years,
A restless pilgrim of the earth and seas,
Gathering the generous thoughts of other lands,
To aid our holy cause. And aid is near :
But we must give the signal. Now, before
The majesty of yon pure heaven, whose eye
Is on our hearts, whose righteous arm befriends

In her triumphant beauty?—Should we pause?
 As if death were not mercy to the pangs
 Which make our lives the records of our foes?
 Let them all perish!—And if one be found
 Amidst our band, to stay th' avenging steel
 For pity, or remorse, or boyish love,
 Then be his doom as theirs! [A pause.

Why gaze ye thus?
 Brethren, what means your silence?

SICI. Be it so!
 If one amongst us stay th' avenging steel
 For love or pity, be his doom as theirs!
 Pledge we our faith to this!

RAI. (*Rushing forward indignantly.*)
 Our faith to *this*!

No! I but *dreamt* I heard it!—Can it be?
 My countrymen, my father!—Is it thus
 That freedom should be won?—Awake! Awake
 To loftier thoughts!—Lift up, exultingly,
 On the crown'd heights, and to the sweeping winds,
 Your glorious banner!—Let your trumpet's blast
 Make the tombs thrill with echoes! Call aloud,
 Proclaim from all your hills, the land shall bear
 The stranger's yoke no longer!—What is he
 Who carries on his practised lip a smile,
 Beneath his vest a dagger, which but waits
 Till the heart bounds with joy, to still its beatings?
 That which our nature's instinct doth recoil from,
 And our blood curdle at—Ay, yours and mine—
 A murderer!—Heard ye?—Shall that name with ours

Go down to after days ?—Oh, friends ! a cause
Like that for which we rise, hath made bright names
Of the elder time as rallying-words to men,
Sounds full of might and immortality !
And shall not ours be such ?

MON. Fond dreamer, peace !
Fame ! What is fame ?—Will our unconscious dust
Start into thrilling rapture from the grave,
At the vain breath of praise ?—I tell thee, youth,
Our souls are parch'd with agonizing thirst,
Which must be quench'd tho' death were in the draught :
We must have vengeance, for our foes have left
No other joy unblighted.

PRO. Oh ! my son,
The time is past for such high dreams as thine.
Thou know'st not whom we deal with. Knightly faith,
And chivalrous honour, are but things whereon
They cast disdainful pity. We must meet
Falsehood with wiles, and insult with revenge.
And, for our names—whate'er the deeds, by which
We burst our bondage—is it not enough
That in the chronicle of days to come,
We, thro' a bright 'For Ever,' shall be call'd
The men who saved their country ?

RAI. Many a land
Hath bow'd beneath the yoke, and then arisen,
As a strong lion rending silken bonds,
And on the open field, before high heaven,
Won such majestic vengeance, as hath made
Its name a power on earth.—Ay, nations own

It is enough of glory to be call'd
The children of the mighty, who redeem'd
Their native soil—but not by means like these.

MON. I have no children.—Of Montalba's blood
Not one red drop doth circle thro' the veins
Of aught that breathes !—Why, what have *I* to do
With far futurity ?—My spirit lives
But in the past.—Away ! when thou dost stand
On this fair earth, as doth a blasted tree
Which the warm sun revives not, *then* return,
Strong in thy desolation: but, till then,
Thou art not for our purpose ; we have need
Of more unshrinking hearts.

RAI. Montalba, know,
I shrink from crime alone. Oh ! if my voice
Might yet have power amongst you, I would say,
Associates, leaders, *be* avenged ! but yet
As knights, as warriors !

MON. Peace ! have we not borne
Th' indelible taint of contumely and chains ?
We *are not* knights and warriors.—Our bright crests
Have been defiled and trampled to the earth.
Boy ! we are slaves—and our revenge shall be
Deep as a slave's disgrace.

RAI. Why, then, farewell :
I leave you to your councils. He that still
Would hold his lofty nature undebased,
And his name pure, were but a loiterer here.

PRO. And is it thus indeed ?—dost *thou* forsake
Our cause, my son ?

RAI. Oh, father! what proud hopes
This hour hath blighted!—yet, whate'er betide,
It is a noble privilege to look up
Fearless in heaven's bright face—and this is mine,
And shall be still.—[*Exit Raimond.*]

PRO. He's gone!—Why, let it be!
I trust our Sicily hath many a son
Valiant as mine.—Associates!—'tis decreed
Our foes shall perish. We have but to name
The hour, the scene, the signal.

MON. It should be
In the full city, when some festival
Hath gathered throngs, and lull'd infatuate hearts
To brief security. Hark! is there not
A sound of hurrying footsteps on the breeze?
We are betray'd.—Who art thou?

Vittoria enters.

PRO. One alone
Should be thus daring. Lady, lift the veil
That shades thy noble brow.
(*She raises her veil, the Sicilians draw back with respect.*)

SIC. Th' affianced bride
Of our lost King!

PRO. And more, Montalba; know
Within this form there dwells a soul as high,
As warriors in their battles e'er have proved,
Or patriots on the scaffold.

VITTORIA. Valiant men!
I come to ask your aid. Ye see me, one

Whose widow'd youth hath all been consecrate
 To a proud sorrow, and whose life is held
 In token and memorial of the dead.
 Say, is it meet that, lingering thus on earth,
 But to behold one great atonement made,
 And keep one name from fading in men's hearts,
 A tyrant's will should force me to profane
 Heaven's altar with unhallow'd vows—and live
 Stung by the keen, unutterable scorn
 Of my own bosom, live—another's bride?

SICI. Never, oh never!—fear not, noble lady!
 Worthy of Conradin!

VIT. Yet hear me still.
 His bride, that Eribert's, who notes our tears
 With his insulting eye of cold derision,
 And, could he pierce the depths where feeling works,
 Would number e'en our agonies as crimes.
 —Say, is this meet?

GUIDO. We deem'd these nuptials, lady,
 Thy willing choice; but 'tis a joy to find
 Thou art noble still. Fear not; by all our wrongs
 This shall not be.

PRO. Vittoria, thou art come
 To ask *our* aid, but we have need of thine.
 Know, the completion of our high designs
 Requires—a festival; and it must be
 Thy bridal!

VIT. Procida!

PRO. Nay, start not thus.
 'Tis no hard task to bind your raven hair

With festal garlands, and to bid the song
 Rise, and the wine-cup mantle. No—nor yet
 To meet your suitor at the glittering shrine,
 Where death, not love, awaits him!

VIT. Can my soul
 Dissemble thus?

PRO. We have no other means
 Of winning our great birthright back from those
 Who have usurp'd it, than so lulling them
 Into vain confidence, that they may deem
 All wrongs forgot; and this may best be done
 By what I ask of thee.

MON. Then will we mix
 With the flush'd revellers, making their gay feast
 The harvest of the grave.

VIT. A bridal day!
 —Must it be so?—Then, chiefs of Sicily,
 I bid you to my nuptials! but be there
 With your bright swords unsheath'd, for thus alone
 My guests should be adorn'd.

PRO. And let thy banquet
 Be soon announced, for there are noble men
 Sentenced to die, for whom we fain would purchase
 Reprieve with other blood.

VIT. Be it then the day
 Preceding that appointed for their doom.

GUIDO. My brother, thou shalt live!—Oppression
 boasts
 No gift of prophecy!—It but remains
 To name our signal, chiefs!

MON. The Vesper-bell.

PRO. Even so, the vesper-bell, whose deep-toned
peal

Is heard o'er land and wave. Part of our band,
Wearing the guise of antic revelry,
Shall enter, as in some fantastic pageant,
The halls of Eribert; and at the hour
Devoted to the sword's tremendous task,
I follow with the rest.—The vesper-bell!
That sound shall wake th' avenger; for 'tis come,
The time when power is in a voice, a breath,
To burst the spell which bound us.—But the night
Is waning, with her stars, which, one by one,
Warn us to part. Friends, to your homes!—your
homes?

That name is yet to win.—Away, prepare

For our next meeting in Palermo's walls.

The Vesper-bell! Remember!

SICR. Fear us not.

The Vesper-bell!

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

END OF ACT THE SECOND.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I.—*Apartment in a Palace.*

Eriberit. Vittoria.

VITTORIA. Speak not of love—it is a word with
 deep,
 Strange magic in its melancholy sound,
 To summon up the dead ; and they should rest,
 At such an hour, forgotten. There are things
 We must throw from us, when the heart would gather
 Strength to fulfil its settled purposes :
 Therefore, no more of love!—But, if to robe
 This form in bridal ornaments, to smile,
 (*I can smile yet,*) at thy gay feast, and stand
 At th' altar by thy side ; if this be deem'd
 Enough, it shall be done.

ERIBERIT. My fortune's star
 Doth rule th' ascendant still ; (*Apart.*) —If not of love,
 Then pardon, lady, that I speak of joy,
 And with exulting heart——

VIT. —There is no joy !
 —Who shall look thro' the far futurity,
 And, as the shadowy visions of events
 Develope on his gaze, midst their dim throng,
 Dare, with oracular mien, to point, and say,
 “ This will bring happiness?”—Who shall do this ?

—Why, thou, and I, and all !—There's One, who sits
In his own bright tranquillity enthroned,
High o'er all storms, and looking far beyond
Their thickest clouds ; but we, from whose dull eyes
A grain of dust hides the great sun, e'en *we*
Usurp his attributes, and talk, as seers,
Of future joy and grief !

ERI. Thy words are strange.
Yet will I hope that peace at length shall settle
Upon thy troubled heart, and add soft grace
To thy majestic beauty.—Fair Vittoria !
Oh ! if my cares——

VIT. I know a day shall come
Of peace to all. Ev'n from my darken'd spirit
Soon shall each restless wish be exorcised,
Which haunts it now, and I shall then lie down
Serenely to repose. Of this no more.
—I have a boon to ask.

ERI. Command my power,
And deem it thus most honour'd.

VIT. Have I then
Soar'd such an eagle-pitch, as to command
The mighty Eriber ?—And yet 'tis meet ;
For I bethink me now, I should have worn
A crown upon this forehead.—Generous lord !
Since thus you give me freedom, know, there is
An hour I have loved from childhood, and a sound,
Whose tones, o'er earth and ocean sweetly bearing
A sense of deep repose, have lull'd me oft

To peace—which is forgetfulness: I mean
The Vesper-bell. I pray you, let it be
The summons to our bridal—Hear you not?
To our fair bridal!

ERI. Lady, let your will
Appoint each circumstance. I am but too bless'd
Proving my homage thus.

VIT. Why, then, 'tis mine
To rule the glorious fortunes of the day,
And I may be content. Yet much remains
For thought to brood on, and I would be left
Alone with my resolves. Kind Eribert!
(Whom I command so absolutely,) now
Part we a few brief hours; and doubt not, when
I am at thy side once more, but I shall stand
There—to the last.

ERI. Your smiles are troubled, lady;
May they ere long be brighter!—Time will seem
Slow till the vesper-bell.

VIT. 'Tis lovers' phrase
To say—time lags; and therefore meet for you:
But with an equal pace the hours move on,
Whether they bear, on their swift silent wing,
Pleasure or—fate.

ERI. Be not so full of thought
On such a day.—Behold, the skies themselves
Look on my joy with a triumphant smile,
Unshadow'd by a cloud.

VIT. 'Tis very meet

That heaven (which loves the just) should wear a
 smile
 In honour of his fortunes.—Now, my lord,
 Forgive me if I say, farewell, until
 Th' appointed hour.

ERR. Lady, a brief farewell.

[*Exeunt separately.*]

SCENE II.—*The Sea-shore.*

PROCIDA. Raimond.

PROCIDA. And dost thou still refuse to share the
 glory
 Of this, our daring enterprize?

RAIMOND. Oh, father!

I too have dreamt of glory, and the word
 Hath to my soul been as a trumpet's voice,
 Making my nature sleepless.—But the deeds
 Whereby it was won, the high exploits, whose tale
 Bids the heart burn, were of another cast
 Than such as thou requirest.

PRO. Every deed
 Hath sanctity, if bearing for its aim
 The freedom of our country; and the sword
 Alike is honour'd in the patriot's hand;
 Searching, midst warrior-hosts, the heart which gave
 Oppression birth; or flashing thro' the gloom
 Of the still chamber, o'er its troubled couch,
 At dead of night.

RAI. (*turning away.*) There is no path but one
For noble natures.

PRO. Wouldst thou ask the man
Who to the earth hath dash'd a nation's chains,
Rent as with heaven's own lightning, by what *means*
The glorious end was won?—Go, swell th' acclaim!
Bid the deliverer, hail! and if his path
To that most bright and sovereign destiny
Hath led o'er trampled thousands, be it call'd
A stern necessity, and not a crime!

RAI. Father! my soul yet kindles at the thought
Of nobler lessons, in my boyhood learn'd
Ev'n from thy voice.—The high remembrances
Of other days are stirring in the heart
Where *thou* didst plant them; and they speak of men
Who needed no vain sophistry to gild
Acts, that would bear heaven's light.—And such be
mine!

Oh, father! is it yet too late to draw
The praise and blessing of all valiant hearts
On our most righteous cause?

PRO. What wouldst thou do?

RAI. I would go forth, and rouse th' indignant
land

To generous combat. Why should freedom strike
Mantled with darkness?—Is there not more strength
E'en in the waving of her single arm
Than hosts can wield against her?—I would rouse
That spirit, whose fire doth press resistless on
To its proud sphere, the stormy field of fight!

PRO. Ay ! and give time and warning to the foe
To gather all his might !—It is too late.
There is a work to be this eve begun,
When rings the vesper-bell ; and, long before
To-morrow's sun hath reach'd i' th' noonday heaven
His throne of burning glory every sound
Of the Provençal tongue within our walls,
As by one thunderstroke—(you are pale, my son)—
Shall be for ever silenced.

RAI. What ! such sounds
As falter on the lip of infancy
In its imperfect utterance ? or are breathed
By the fond mother, as she lulls her babe ?
Or in sweet hymns, upon the twilight air
Pour'd by the timid maid ?—Must all alike
Be still'd in death ; and wouldst thou tell my heart
There is no crime in *this* ?

PRO. Since thou dost feel
Such horror of our purpose, in thy power
Are means that might avert it.

RAI. Speak ! Oh speak !

PRO. How would those rescued thousands bless
thy name

Shouldst thou betray us !

RAI. Father ! I can bear—

Ay, proudly woo—the keenest questioning
Of thy soul-gifted eye ; which almost seems
To claim a part of heaven's dread royalty,
—The power that searches thought !

PRO. (after a pause.) Thou hast a brow

And 'tis thus

Youth fades from off our spirit ; and the robes
Of beauty and of majesty, wherewith
We clothed our idols, drop !—O ! bitter day,
When, at the crushing of our glorious world,
We start, and find men thus !—Yet be it so !
Is not my soul still powerful, in *itself*—
To realize its dreams ?—Ay, shrinking not
From the pure eye of heaven, my brow may well
Undaunted meet my father's.—But, away !
Thou shalt be saved, sweet Constance !—Love is yet
Mightier than vengeance. [Exit Raimond.

SCENE III.—*Gardens of a Palace.*

Constance, *alone.*

CONSTANCE. There was I'm when my thoughts
Wander'd not
Beyond these fairy scenes ; when, but to catch
The languid fragrance of the southern breeze
From the rich-flowering citrons, or to rest,

Dreaming of some wild legend, in the shade
Of the dark laurel-foliage, was enough
Of happiness.—How have these calm delights
Fled from before one passion, as the dews;
The delicate gems of morning, are exhaled
By the great sun !

(*Raimond enters.*)

Raimond ! oh ! now thou'rt come
I read it in thy look, to say farewell
For the last time—the last !

RAI. No, best beloved !
I come to tell thee there is now no power
To part us—but in death.

CON. I have dreamt of joy,
But never aught like this.—Speak yet again !
Say, we shall part no more !

RAI. No more, if love
Can strive with darker spirits, and he is strong
In his immortal nature ! all is changed
Since last we met. My father—keep the tale
Secret from all, and most of all, my Constance,
From Eribert—my father is return'd :
I leave thee not.

CON. Thy father ! blessed sound !
Good angels be his guard !—Oh ! if he knew
How my soul clings to thine, he could not hate
Even a Provençal maid !—Thy father !—now
Thy soul will be at peace, and I shall see
The sunny happiness of earlier days

Look from thy brow once more!—But how is this?
Thine eye reflects not the glad soul of mine;
And in thy look is that which ill befits
A tale of joy.

RAI. A dream is on my soul;
I see a slumberer, crown'd with flowers, and smiling
As in delighted visions, on the brink
Of a dread chasm; and this strange phantasy
Hath cast so deep a shadow o'er my thoughts,
I cannot but be sad.

CON. Why, let me sing
One of the sweet wild strains you love so well,
And this will banish it.

RAI. It may not be.
Oh! gentle Constance, go not forth to-day:
Such dreams are ominous.

CON. Have you then forgot
My brother's nuptial feast?—I must be one
Of the gay train attending to the shrine
His stately bride. In sooth, my step of joy
Will print earth lightly now—What fear'st thou, love?
Look all around! these blue transparent skies,
And sun-beams pouring a more buoyant life
Thro' each glad thrilling vein, will brightly chase
All thought of evil.—Why, the very air
Breathes of delight!—Thro' all its glowing realms
Doth music blend with fragrance, and e'en here
The city's voice of jubilee is heard
Till each light leaf seems trembling unto sounds
Of human joy!

RAI. There lie far deeper things,—
 Things, that may darken thought for life, beneath
 That city's festive semblance.—I have pass'd
 Thro' the glad multitudes, and I have mark'd
 A stern intelligence in meeting eyes,
 Which deem'd their flash unnoticed, and a quick,
 Suspicious vigilance, too intent to clothe
 Its mien with carelessness; and, now and then,
 A hurrying start, a whisper, or a hand
 Pointing by stealth to some one, singled out
 Amidst the reckless throng. O'er all is spread
 A mantling flush of revelry, which may hide
 Much from unpractised eyes; but lighter signs
 Have been prophetic oft.

CON. I tremble!—Raimond!
 What may these things portend?

RAI. It was a day
 Of festival, like this; the city sent
 Up thro' her sunny firmament a voice
 Joyous as now; when, scarcely heralded
 By one deep moan, forth from his cavernous depths
 The earthquake burst; and the wide splendid scene
 Became one chaos of all fearful things,
 Till the brain whirl'd, partaking the sick motion
 Of rocking palaces.

CON. And then didst thou,
 My noble Raimond! thro' the dreadful paths
 Laid open by destruction, past the chasms,
 Whose fathomless clefts, a moment's work, had given
 One burial unto thousands, rush to save
 Thy trembling Constance! she who lives to bless

Thy generous love, that still the breath of heaven
 Wafts gladness to her soul!

RAI. Heaven!—Heaven is just!
 And being so, must guard thee, sweet one, still.
 Trust none beside.—Oh! the omnipotent skies
 Make their wrath manifest, but insidious *man*
 Doth compass those he hates with *secret* snares,
 Wherein lies fate. Know, danger walks abroad,
 Mask'd as a reveller. Constance! oh! by all
 Our tried affection; all the vows which bind
 Our hearts together, meet me in these bowers,
 Here, I adjure thee, meet me, when the bell
 Doth sound for vesper-prayer!

CON. And know'st thou not
 'Twill be the bridal hour?

RAI. It will not, love!
 That hour will bring no bridal!—Nought of this
 To human ear; but speed thou hither, fly,
 When evening brings that signal.—Dost thou heed?
 This is no meeting, by a lover sought
 To breathe fond tales, and make the twilight groves
 And stars, attest his vows; deem thou not so,
 Therefore denying it!—I tell thee, Constance!
 If thou would'st save me from such fierce despair
 As falls on man, beholding all he loves
 Perish before him, while his strength can but
 Strive with his agony—thou'lt meet me then?
 Look on me, love!—I am not oft so moved—
 Thou'lt meet me?

CON. Oh! what mean thy words?—If then
 My steps are free,—I will. Be thou but calm.

RAI. Be calm!—there is a cold and sullen calm,
 And, were my wild fears made realities,
 It might be mine; but, in this dread suspense,
 This conflict of all terrible phantasies,
 There is no calm.—Yet fear thou not, dear love!
 I will watch o'er thee still. And now, farewell
 Until that hour!

CON. My Raimond, fare thee well. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*Room in the Citadel of Palermo.*

Alberti. De Couci.

DE COUCI. Said'st thou this night?

ALBERTI. This very night—and lo!

E'en now the sun declines.

DE COU. What! are they arm'd?

ALB. All arm'd, and strong in vengeance and despair.

DE COU. Doubtful and strange the tale! Why was
 not this

Reveal'd before?

ALB. Mistrust me not, my lord!

That stern and jealous Procida hath kept
 O'er all my steps, (as though he did suspect
 The purposes, which oft his eye hath sought
 To read in mine,) a watch so vigilant,
 I knew not how to warn thee, tho' for this
 Alone I mingled with his bands, to learn
 Their projects and their strength. Thou know'st my
 faith

To Anjou's house full well.

SCENE V.—A Banquetting Hall.

Provençal Nobles assembled.

1 NOBLE. Joy be to this fair meeting!—Who hath
seen

The viceroy's bride?

2 NOBLE. I saw her, as she pass'd
The gazing throngs assembled in the city.
'Tis said she hath not left for years, till now,
Her castle's wood-girt solitude. 'Twill gall
These proud Sicilians, that her wide domains
Should be the conqueror's guerdon.

3 NOBLE. 'Twas their boast
With what fond faith she worshipp'd still the name
Of the boy, Conradin. How will the slaves
Brook this new triumph of their lords?

2 NOBLE. In sooth
It stings them to the quick. In the full streets
They mix with our Provençals, and assume
A guise of mirth, but it sits hardly on them.
'Twere worth a thousand festivals, to see
With what a bitter and unnatural effort
They strive to smile!

1 NOBLE. Is this Vittoria fair?

2 NOBLE. Of a most noble mien; but yet her beauty
Is wild and awful, and her large dark eyes
In its unsettled glances, hath strange power,
From which thou'lt shrink, as I did.

1 NOBLE. Hush! they come.

Enter Eribert, Vittoria, Constance, and others.

ERIBERT. Welcome, my noble friends!—there must
not lower

One clouded brow to-day in Sicily!

Behold my bride!

NOBLES. Receive our homage, lady!

VITTORIA. I bid all welcome. May the feast we
offer

Prove worthy of such guests!

ERI. Look on her, friends!

And say, if that majestic brow is not

Meet for a diadem?

VIT. 'Tis well, my lord!

When memory's pictures fade, 'tis kindly done

To brighten their dimm'd hues!

1 NOBLE (*apart.*) Mark'd you her glance?

2 NOBLE. (*apart.*) What eloquent scorn was there!

yet he, th' elate

Of heart, perceives it not.

ERI. Now to the feast!

Constance, you look not joyous. I have said

That all should smile to-day.

CON. Forgive me, brother!

The heart is wayward, and its garb of pomp

At times oppresses it.

ERI. Why, how is this?

CON. Voices of woe, and prayers of agony

Unto my soul have risen, and left sad sounds

There echoing still. Yet would I fain be gay,

Since 'tis your wish.—In truth, I should have been
A village-maid!

ERI. But, being as you are,
Not thus ignobly free, command your looks,
(They may be taught obedience,) to reflect
The aspect of the time.

VIT. And know, fair maid!
That if in this unskill'd, you stand alone
Amidst our court of pleasure.

ERI. To the feast!
Now let the red wine foam!—There should be mirth
When conquerors revel!—Lords of this fair isle!
Your good sword's heritage, crown each bowl, and
pledge

The present and the future! for they both
Look brightly on us. Dost thou smile, my bride?

VIT. Yes, Eriber!—thy prophecies of joy
Have taught e'en me to smile.

ERI. 'Tis well. To-day
I have won a fair and almost *royal* bride;

To-morrow—let the bright sun speed his course,

To waft me happiness!—my proudest foes

Must die—and then my slumber shall be laid

On rose-leaves, with no envious fold, to mar

The luxury of its visions!—Fair Vittoria,

Your looks are troubled!

VIT. It is strange, but oft,
Midst festal songs and garlands, o'er my soul
Death comes, with some dull image! as you spoke

Of those whose blood is claim'd, I thought for them
Who, in a darkness thicker than the night
E'er wove with all her clouds, have pined so long :
How blessed were the stroke which makes them
things

Of that invisible world, wherein, we trust,
There is, at least, no bondage!—But should *we*
From such a scene as this, where all earth's joys
Contend for mastery, and the very sense
Of life is rapture ; should *we* pass, I say,
At once from such excitements to the void
And silent gloom of that which doth await us—
—Were it not dreadful ?

ERI. Banish such dark thoughts!

They ill beseem the hour.

VIT. There is no hour

Of this mysterious world, in joy or woe,
But they beseem it well!—Why, what a slight,
Impalpable bound is that, th' unseen, which severs
Being from death!—And who can tell how near
Its misty brink he stands?

1 NOBLE. (*aside.*) What mean her words?

2 NOBLE. There's some dark mystery here.

ERI. No more of this!

Pour the bright juice which Etna's glowing vines
Yield to the conquerors! And let music's voice
Dispel these ominous dreams!—Wake, harp and
song!

Swell out your triumph!

(A Messenger enters, bearing a letter.)

MESS.

Pardon, my good lord!

But this demands—

ERI.

What means thy breathless haste?

And that ill-boding mien?—Away! such looks

Befit not hours like these.

MES.

The Lord De Couci

Bade me bear this, and say, 'tis fraught with tidings

Of life and death.

VIT. (*hurriedly*.) Is this a time for ought

But revelry?—My lord, these dull intrusions

Mar the bright spirit of the festal scene!

ERI. (*to the Messenger*) Hence! tell the Lord De
Couci we will talk

Of life and death to-morrow.

[*Exit Messenger.*]

Let there be

Around me none but joyous looks to-day,

And strains whose very echoes wake to mirth!

(A band of the conspirators enter, to the sound
of music, disguised as shepherds, bac-
chanals, &c.)

ERI. What forms are these?—What means this
antic triumph?

VIT. 'Tis but a rustic pageant, by my vassals

Prepared to grace our bridal. Will you not

Hear their wild music? Our Sicilian vales

Have many a sweet and mirthful melody,

To which the glad heart bounds.—Breathe ye some
strain

Meet for the time, ye sons of Sicily!

(One of the Masquers sings.)

THE festal eve, o'er earth and sky,
In her sunset robe, looks bright,
And the purple hills of Sicily,
With their vineyards, laugh in light;
From the marble cities of her plains

Glad voices mingling swell;

—But with yet more loud and lofty strains,
They shall hail the Vesper-bell!

Oh! sweet its tones, when the summer breeze

Their cadence wafts afar,

To float o'er the blue Sicilian seas,

As they gleam to the first pale star!

The shepherd greets them on his height,

The hermit in his cell;

—But a deeper power shall breathe, to-night,

In the sound of the Vesper-bell!

[The Bell rings.]

ERI. —It is the hour!—Hark, hark!—my bride,
our summons!

The altar is prepared and crown'd with flowers

That wait—

VIT. The victim! *(A tumult heard without.)*

(Procida and Montalba enter, with others, armed.)

PROCIDA. Strike! the hour is come!

VIT. Welcome, avengers, welcome! Now, be
strong!

*(The Conspirators throw off their disguise, and
rush, with their swords drawn, upon the
Provençals. Eribert is wounded, and falls.)*

PRO. Now hath fate reached thee in thy mid career,
Thou reveller in a nation's agonies !

*(The Provençals are driven off, and pursued by
the Sicilians.)*

CON. *(supporting Eribert.)* My brother ! oh ! my
brother !

ERI. Have I stood

A leader in the battle-fields of kings,
To perish thus at last ?—Ay, by these pangs,
And this strange chill, that heavily doth creep,
Like a slow poison, thro' my curdling veins,
This should be—death !—In sooth a dull exchange
For the gay bridal feast !

VOICES. *(without,)* Remember Conradin !—spare
none, spare none !

VIT. *(throwing off her bridal wreath and ornaments.)*

This is proud freedom ! Now my soul may cast,
In generous scorn, her mantle of dissembling
To earth for ever !—And it is such joy,
As if a captive, from his dull, cold cell,
Might soar at once on charter'd wing to range
The realms of starr'd infinity !—Away !
Vain mockery of a bridal wreath ! The hour
For which stern patience ne'er kept watch in vain
Is come ; and I may give my bursting heart
Full and indignant scope.—Now, Eribert !
Believe in retribution ! What, proud man !
Prince, ruler, conqueror ! didst thou deem heaven
slept ?

“ Or that the unseen, immortal ministers,

“ Ranging the world, to note e’en purposed crime
 “ In burning characters, had laid aside
 “ Their everlasting attributes for *thee*?”
 —Oh! blind security!—He, in whose dread hand
 The lightnings vibrate, holds them back, until
 The trampler of this goodly earth hath reach’d
 His pyramid-height of power; that so his fall
 May, with more fearful oracles, make pale
 Man’s crown’d oppressors!

CON. Oh! reproach him not!
 His soul is trembling on the dizzy brink
 Of that dim world where passion may not enter.
 Leave him in peace!

VOICES (*without.*) Anjou, Anjou!—De Couci to
 the rescue!

ERI. (*half-raising himself.*) My brave Provençals!
 do ye combat still?
 And I, your chief, am here!—Now, now I feel
 That death indeed is bitter!

VIT. Fare thee well!
 Thine eyes so oft, with their insulting smile,
 Have looked on man’s last pangs, thou shouldst, by
 this,
 Be perfect how to die! [Exit Vittoria.]

Raimond enters.

RAIMOND. Away, my Constance!
 Now is the time for flight. Our slaughtering bands
 Are scatter’d far and wide. A little while
 And thou shalt be in safety. Know’st thou not

That low sweet vale, where dwells the holy man,
Anselmo? He whose hermitage is rear'd
'Mid some old temple's ruins?—Round the spot
His name hath spread so pure and deep a charm,
'Tis hallow'd as a sanctuary, wherein
Thou shalt securely bide, till this wild storm
Have spent its fury. Haste!

CON. I will not fly!
While in his heart there is one throb of life,
One spark in his dim eyes, I will not leave
The brother of my youth to perish thus,
Without one kindly bosom to sustain
His dying head.

ERI. The clouds are darkening round.
There are strange voices ringing in mine ear
That summon me—to what?—But I have been
Used to command!—Away! I will not die
But on the field—

CON. (*kneeling by him.*) Oh heaven! be merciful,
As thou art just!—for he is now where nought
But mercy can avail him!—It is past!

Guido enters, with his sword drawn.

GUIDO (*to Raimond.*) I've sought thee long—Why
art thou lingering here?

Haste, follow me!—Suspicion with thy name

Joins that word—*Traitor!*

RAI. Traitor!—Guido?

GUIDO.

Yes!

Hast thou not heard that, with his men-at-arms,

After vain conflict with a people's wrath,
 De Couci hath escaped?—And there are those
 Who murmur that from *thee* the warning came
 Which saved him from our vengeance. But e'en yet
 In the red current of Provençal blood
 That doubt may be effaced. Draw thy good sword,
 And follow me!

RAI. And *thou* couldst doubt me, Guido!
 'Tis come to this!—Away! mistrust me still.
 I will not stain my sword with deeds like thine.
 Thou know'st me not!

GUIDO. Raimond di Procida!
 If thou art he whom once I deemed so noble—
 Call me thy friend no more! [Exit Guido.

RAI. (*after a pause.*) Rise, dearest, rise!
 Thy duty's task hath nobly been fulfill'd,
 E'en in the face of death; but all is o'er,
 And this is now no place where nature's tears
 In quiet sanctity may freely flow.
 —Hark! the wild sounds that wait on fearful deeds
 Are swelling on the winds, as the deep roar
 Of fast-advancing billows; and for *thee*
 I shame not thus to tremble.—Speed, oh, speed!
 [Exeunt.

END OF ACT THE THIRD.

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE I.—*A Street in Palermo.**Procida enters.*

PROCIDA. How strange and deep a stillness loads
 the air,
 As with the power of midnight!—Ay, where death
 Hath pass'd, there should be silence.—But this hush
 Of nature's heart, this breathlessness of all things,
 Doth press on thought too heavily, and the sky,
 With its dark robe of purple thunder-clouds
 Brooding in sullen masses, o'er my spirit
 Weighs like an omen!—Wherefore should this be?
 Is not our task achieved, the mighty work
 Of our deliverance?—Yes; I should be joyous;
 But this our feeble nature, with its quick
 Instinctive superstitions, will drag down
 Th' ascending soul.—And I have fearful bodings
 That treachery lurks amongst us.—Raimond! Rai-
 mond!
 Oh! Guilt ne'er made a mien like his its garb!
 It cannot be!

Montalba, Guido, and other Sicilians, enter.

PRO. Welcome; we meet in joy!
Now may we bear ourselves erect, resuming
The kingly port of freemen! Who shall dare,
After this proof of slavery's dread recoil,
To weave us chains again?—Ye have done well.

MONTALBA. We have done well. There need no
choral song,
No shouting multitudes to blazon forth
Our stern exploits.—The *silence* of our foes
Doth vouch enough, and they are laid to rest
Deep as the sword could make it. Yet our task
Is still but half achieved, since, with his bands,
De Couci hath escaped, and, doubtless, leads
Their footsteps to Messina, where our foes
Will gather all their strength. Determined hearts,
And deeds to startle earth, are yet required,
To make the mighty sacrifice complete.—
Where is thy son?

PRO. I know not. Once last night
He cross'd my path, and with one stroke beat down
A sword just raised to smite me, and restored
My own, which in that deadly strife had been
Wrench'd from my grasp: but when I would have
press'd him
To my exulting bosom, he drew back,
And with a sad, and yet a scornful, smile,
Full of strange meaning, left me. Since that hour
I have not seen him: Wherefore didst thou ask?

MON. It matters not. We have deeper things to speak of.—

Know'st thou that we have traitors in our councils?

PRO. I know some voice in secret must have warn'd De Couci; or his scatter'd bands had ne'er the kingly So soon been marshall'd, and in close array Led hence as from the field. Hast thou heard aught That may develope this?

MON. The guards we set To watch the city-gates have seized, this morn, One whose quick fearful glance, and hurried step Betray'd his guilty purpose. Mark! he bore (Amidst the tumult deeming that his flight Might all unnoticed pass) these scrolls to him, The fugitive Provençal. Read and judge!

PRO. Where is this messenger?

MON. Where *should* he be?— They slew him in their wrath.

PRO. — Unwisely done! Give me the scrolls.

[*He reads.*]
Now, if there be such things As may to death add sharpness, yet delay The pang which gives release; if there be power In execration, to call down the fires Of yon avenging heaven, whose rapid shafts But for such guilt were aimless; be they heap'd Upon the traitor's head!—Scorn make his name Her mark for ever!

MON. In our passionate blindness, I have not seen him. Wherefore didst thou ask?

We send forth curses, whose deep stings recoil
Oft on ourselves.

PRO. Whate'er fate hath of ruin
Fall on his house!—What! to resign again
That freedom for whose sake our souls have now
Engrain'd themselves in blood!—Why, who is he
That hath devised this treachery?—To the scroll
Why fix'd he not his name, so stamping it
With an immortal infamy, whose brand
Might warn men from him?—Who should be so vile?
Alberti?—In his eye is that which ever
Shrinks from encountering mine!—But no! his race
Is of our noblest—Oh! he could not shame
That high descent!—Urbino?—Conti?—No!
They are too deeply pledged.—There's one name
more!

—I cannot utter it!—Now shall I read
Each face with cold suspicion, which doth blot
From man's high mien its native royalty,
And seal his noble forehead with the impress
Of its own vile imaginings!—Speak your thoughts,
Montalba! Guido!—Who should this man be?

MON. Why what Sicilian youth unsheath'd, last night
His sword to aid our foes, and turn'd its edge
Against his country's chiefs?—He that did *this*,
May well be deem'd for guiltier treason ripe.

PRO. And who is he?

MON. Nay, ask thy son!

PRO. My son!

What should *he* know of such a recreant heart?
Speak, Guido! thou'rt his friend!

GUIDO. I would not wear
The brand of such a name!

PRO. How! what means this?
A flash of light breaks in upon my soul!
Is it to blast me?—Yet the fearful doubt
Hath crept in darkness through my thoughts before,
And been flung from them.—Silence!—Speak not

yet!
I would be calm, and meet the thunder-burst
With a strong heart. *(A pause.)*

Now, what have I to hear?
Your tidings?

GUIDO. Briefly, 'twas your son did thus;
He hath disgraced your name.

PRO. My son did thus!
—Are thy words oracles, that I should search
Their hidden meaning out?—*What* did my son?
I have forgot the tale.—Repeat it, quick!

GUIDO. 'Twill burst upon thee all too soon. While

we

Were busy at the dark and solemn rites
Of retribution; while we bathed the earth
In red libations, which will consecrate
The soil they mingled with to freedom's step
Thro' the long march of ages; 'twas *his* task
To shield from danger a Provençal maid,
Sister of him whose cold oppression stung
Our hearts to madness.

MON. What! should she be spared
To keep that name from perishing on earth?
—I cross'd them in their path, and raised my sword
To smite her in her champion's arms.—We fought—
The boy disarm'd me!—And I live to tell
My shame, and wreak my vengeance!
GUIDO. Who but he
Could warn De Couci, or devise the guilt
These scrolls reveal?—Hath not the traitor still
Sought, with his fair and specious eloquence,
To win us from our purpose?—All things seem
Leagued to unmask him.

MON. Know you not there came,
E'en in the banquet's hour, from this De Couci
One, bearing unto Eribert the tidings
Of all our purposed deeds?—And have we not
Proof, as the noon-day clear, that Raimond loves
The sister of that tyrant?

PRO. There was one
Who mourn'd for being childless!—Let him now
Feast o'er his children's graves, and I will join
The revelry!

MON. (*apart*.) You shall be childless too!

PRO. Was't you, Montalba?—Now rejoice!

There is no name so near you that its stains
Should call the fever'd and indignant blood
To your dark cheek!—But I will dash to earth
The weight that presses on my heart, and then
Be glad as thou art.

MON. What means this, my lord? Who hath seen gladness on Montalba's mien?

PRO. Why, should not all be glad who have no sons To tarnish their bright name?

MON. I am not used To bear with mockery.

PRO. Friend! By yon high heaven, I mock thee not!—'t is a proud fate, to live Alone and unallied.—Why, what's alone? A word whose sense is—*free*!—Ay, free from all The venom'd stings implanted in the heart By those it loves.—Oh! I could laugh to think O'th' joy that riots in baronial halls, When the word comes—"A son is born!"—A son!—They should say thus—"He that shall knit your

To furrows, not of years; and bid your eye Quail its proud glance; to tell the earth its shame,—
"Is born, and so, rejoice!"—Then might we feast, And know the cause:—Were it not excellent?

MON. This is all idle. There are deeds to do; Arouse thee, Procida!

PRO. Why, am I not as calm as immortal justice?—She can strike, And yet be passionless—and thus will I. I know thy meaning.—Deeds to do!—It is well. They shall be done ere thought on.—Go ye forth. There is a youth who calls himself my son, His name is—Raimond—in his eye is light That shows like truth—but be not ye deceived.

Bear him in chains before us. We will sit
To-day in judgment, and the skies shall see
The strength which girds our nature.—Will not this
Be glorious, brave Montalba?—Linger not,
Ye tardy messengers! for there are things
Which ask the speed of storms.

[*Exeunt Guido and others.*]

—Is not this well?

MON. 'Tis noble. Keep thy spirit to this proud
height,

(*Aside*) And then—be desolate like me!—my woes
Will at the thought grow light.

PRO. What now remains
To be prepared?—There should be solemn pomp
To grace a day like this.—Ay, breaking hearts
Require a drapery to conceal their throbs
From cold inquiring eyes; and it must be
Ample and rich, that so their gaze may not
Explore what lies beneath. [*Exit Procida.*]

MON. Now this is well!
—I hate this Procida; for he hath won
In all our councils that ascendancy
And mastery o'er bold hearts, which should have been
Mine by a thousand claims.—Had he the strength
Of wrongs like mine?—No! for that name—his
country—

He strikes—my vengeance hath a deeper fount:
But there's dark joy in this!—And fate hath barr'd
My soul from every other. [*Exit Montalba.*]

SCENE II.—*A Hermitage, surrounded by the Ruins of an ancient Temple.*

Constance. Anselmo.

CONSTANCE. 'Tis strange he comes not !—Is not this the still

And sultry hour of noon ?—He should have been Here by the day-break.—Was there not a voice ?

—“ No ! 'tis the shrill Cicada, with glad life

“ Peopling these marble ruins, as it sports

“ Amidst them, in the sun.—Hark ! yet again !”

No ! no !—Forgive me, father ! that I bring

Earth's restless griefs and passions to disturb

The stillness of thy holy solitude ;

My heart is full of care.

ANSELMO. There is no place

So hallow'd, as to be unvisited

By mortal cares. Nay, whither should we go,

With our deep griefs and passions, but to scenes

Lonely and still ; where he that made our hearts

Will speak to them in whispers ? I have known

Affliction too, my daughter.

CON. Hark ! his step !

I know it well—he comes—my Raimond, welcome !

Vittoria enters, Constance shrinks back on per-

ceiving her.

Oh heaven ! that aspect tells a fearful tale.

VITTORIA. (not observing her.) There is a cloud of

horror on my soul ;

And on thy words, Anselmo, peace doth wait,
 Even as an echo, following the sweet close
 Of some divine and solemn harmony :
 Therefore I sought thee now. Oh ! speak to me
 Of holy things, and names, in whose deep sound
 Is power to bid the tempests of the heart
 Sink, like a storm rebuked.

ANS. What recent grief—
 Darkens thy spirit thus ?

VIT. I said not grief.
 We should rejoice to-day, but joy is not
 That which it hath been. In the flowers which
 wreath

Its mantling cup there is a scent unknown,
 Fraught with some strange delirium. All things now
 Have changed their nature ; still, I say, rejoice !
 There is a cause, Anselmo !—We are free,
 Free and avenged !—Yet on my soul there hangs
 A darkness, heavy as th' oppressive gloom
 Of midnight phantasies.—Ay, for this, too,
 There is a cause.

ANS. How say'st thou, we are free ?
 There may have raged, within Palermo's walls,
 Some brief wild tumult, but too well I know
 They call the stranger, lord.

VIT. Who calls the *dead* ?
 Conqueror or lord ?—Hush ! breathe it not aloud,
 The wild winds must not hear it !—Yet, again,
 I tell thee, we are free !

ANS. Thine eye hath look'd

On fearful deeds, for still their shadows hang
O'er its dark orb.—Speak ! I adjure thee, say,
How hath this work been wrought ?

VIT. Peace ! ask me not !
Why shouldst *thou* hear a tale to send thy blood
Back on its fount ?—We cannot wake them now
The storm is in my soul, but *they* are all
At rest !—Ay, sweetly may the slaughter'd babe
By its dead mother sleep ; and warlike men
Who, midst the slain have slumber'd oft before,
Making the shield their pillow, may repose
Well, now their toils are done.—Is't not enough ?

CON. Merciful heaven ! have such things been ?

And yet

There is no shade come o'er the laughing sky !
—I am an outcast now.

ANS. O Thou, whose ways
Clouds mantle fearfully ; of all the blind,
But terrible, ministers that work thy wrath,
How much is *man* the fiercest !—Others know
Their limits—Yes ! the earthquakes, and the storms
And the volcanoes !—He alone o'erleaps
The bounds of retribution !—Couldst thou gaze,
Vittoria ! with thy woman's heart and eye,
On such dread scenes unmoved ?

VIT. Was it for me
To stay th' avenging sword ?—No, tho' it pierced
My very soul ?—Hark, hark, what thrilling shrieks
“ Ring thro' the air around me !—Can'st thou not
“ Bid them be hush'd ?—Oh ! look not on me thus !

ANS. "Lady! thy thoughts lend sternness to the looks
 "Which are but sad!"—Have all then perish'd? *all?*
 Was there no mercy?

VIT. Mercy! it hath been
 A word forbidden as th' unhallowed names
 Of evil powers.—Yet one there was who dared
 To own the guilt of pity, and to aid
 The victims; but in vain.—Of him no more!
 He is a traitor, and a traitor's death
 Will be his meed.

CON. (*coming forward.*) Oh Heaven!—his name,
 his name?
 Is it—it cannot be!

VIT. (*starting.*) Thou here, pale girl!
 I deem'd thee with the dead!—How hast thou 'scaped
 The snare?—Who saved thee, last of all thy race?
 Was it not he of whom I spake e'en now,
 Raimond di Procida?

CON. It is enough.
 Now the storm breaks upon me, and I sink!
 Must he too die?

VIT. Is it ev'n so?—Why then,
 Live on—thou hast the arrow at thy heart!
 "Fix not on me thy sad reproachful eyes;"
 I mean not to betray thee. Thou may'st live!
 Why should death bring thee his oblivious balms?
 He visits but the happy.—Didst thou ask
 If Raimond too must die?—It is as sure
 As that his blood is on *thy* head, for thou
 Didst win him to this treason.

CON. *And to the* When did man
 “Call mercy, *treason?*—Take my life, but save
 “My noble Raimond!”

VIT. Maiden! he must die.
 E’en now the youth before his judges stands,
 And they are men who, to the voice of prayer,
 Are as the rock is to the murmur’d sighing
 Of summer-waves; nay, tho’ a father sit
 On their tribunal. Bend thou not to me.
 What would’st thou?

CON. *And—* Mercy!—Oh! wert thou to plead
 But with a look, e’en yet he might be saved!
 If thou hast ever loved—

VIT. *Thy son—* If I have loved?
 It is *that* love forbids me to relent;
 I am what it hath made me.—O’er my soul
 Lightning hath pass’d, and sear’d it. Could I weep,
 I then might pity—but it will not be.

CON. Oh! thou wilt yet relent, for woman’s heart
 Was formed to suffer and to melt.

VIT. Away! too late!
 Why should I pity thee?—Thou wilt but prove
 What I have known before—and yet I live!
 Nature is strong, and it may all be borne—
 The sick impatient yearning of the heart
 For that which is not; and the weary sense
 Of the dull void, wherewith our homes have been
 Circled by death; yes, all things may be borne!
 All, save remorse.—But I will *not* bow down
 My spirit to that dark power:—there *was* no guilt!
 Anselmo! wherefore didst thou talk of guilt?

ANS. Ay, thus doth sensitive conscience quicken
thought,

Lending reproachful voices to a breeze,

Keen lightning to a look.

VIT.

Leave me in peace !

Is't not enough that I should have a sense

Of things thou canst not see, all wild and dark,

And of unearthly whispers, haunting me

With dread suggestions, but that *thy* cold words,

Old man, should gall me too?—Must all conspire

Against me?—Oh ! thou beautiful spirit ! wot

To shine upon my dreams with looks of love,

Where art *thou* vanish'd ?—Was it not the thought

Of thee which urged me to the fearful task,

And wilt thou now forsake me?—I must seek

The shadowy woods again, for there, perchance,

Still may thy voice be in my twilight-paths ;

—Here I but meet despair !

[Exit Vittoria.]

ANS. (to Constance.) Despair not *thou*,

My daughter !—he that purifies the heart

With grief, will lend it strength.

CON. (endeavouring to rouse herself.) Did she
not say

That some one was to die ?

ANS. I tell thee not

Thy pangs are vain—for nature will have way.

Earth must have tears ; yet in a heart like thine,

Faith may not yield its place.

CON.

Have I not heard

Some fearful tale ?—Who said, that there should rest

Blood on my soul ?—What blood ?—I never bore

Hatred, kind father, unto aught that breathes ;

Raimond doth know it well.—Raimond !—High
heaven,

It bursts upon me now !—and he must die !

For my sake—e'en for mine !

ANS. Her words were strange,
And her proud mind seem'd half to frenzy wrought—
—Perchance this may not be.

CON. It *must* not be.
Why do I linger here ? (*She rises to depart.*)

ANS. Where wouldst thou go ?

CON. To give their stern and unrelenting hearts
A victim in his stead.

ANS. Stay ! wouldst thou rush
On certain death ?

CON. I may not falter now.
—Is not the life of woman all bound up
In her affections ?—What hath *she* to do
In this bleak world alone ?—It may be well
For *man* on his triumphal course to move ;
Uncumber'd by soft bonds ; but *we* were born
For love and grief.

ANS. Thou fair and gentle thing,
Unused to meet a glance which doth not speak
Of tenderness or homage ! how shouldst *thou*
Bear the hard aspect of unpitying men,
Or face the king of terrors ?

CON. There is strength
Deep bedded in our hearts, of which we reck
But little, till the shafts of heaven have pierced

Its fragile dwelling.—Must not earth be rent
 Before her gems are found?—Oh! now I feel
 Worthy the generous love which hath not shunn'd
 To look on death for me!—My heart hath given
 Birth to as deep a courage, and a faith
 As high in its devotion. [Exit Constance.]

Ans. She is gone!
 Is it to perish?—God of mercy! lend
 Power to my voice, that so its prayer may save
 This pure and lofty creature!—I will follow—
 But her young footstep and heroic heart
 Will bear her to destruction faster far
 Than I can track her path. [Exit ANSELMO.]

SCENE III.—*Hall of a Public Building.*

Procida, Montalba, Guido, and others, seated as on a
Tribunal.

PROCIDA. The morn lower'd darkly, but the sun hath
 now,
 With fierce and angry splendour, thro' the clouds
 Burst forth, as if impatient to behold
 This, our high triumph.—Lead the prisoner in.

(*Raimond is brought in fettered and guarded.*)

Why, what a bright and fearless brow is here!
 —Is this man guilty?—Look on him, Montalba!

MONTALBA. Be firm. Should justice falter at a look?

PRO. No, thou say'st well. Her eyes are filleted,

Or should be so. Thou, that dost call thyself—
—But no ! I will not breathe a traitor's name—
Speak ! thou art arraign'd of treason.

RAIMOND. I arraign
You, before whom I stand, of darker guilt,
In the bright face of heaven ; and your own hearts
Give echo to the charge. Your very looks
Have ta'en the stamp of crime, and seem to shrink,
With a perturb'd and haggard wildness, back
From the too-searching light.—Why, what hath
wrought

This change on noble brows ?—There is a voice,
With a deep answer, rising from the blood
Your hands have coldly shed !—Ye are of those
From whom just men recoil, with curdling veins,
All thrill'd by life's abhorrent consciousness,
And sensitive feeling of a *murderer's* presence.
—Away ! come down from your tribunal-seat,
Put off your robes of state, and let your mien
Be pale and humbled ; for ye bear about you
That which repugnant earth doth sicken at,
More than the pestilence.—That I should live
To see my father shrink !

PRO. Montalba, speak !
There's something chokes my voice—but fear me not.

MON. If we must plead to vindicate our acts,
Be it when thou hast made thine own look clear ;
Most eloquent youth ! What answer canst thou
make
To this our charge of treason ?

RAI. I will plead
 That cause before a mightier judgment-throne,
 Where mercy is not guilt. But here, I feel
 Too buoyantly the glory and the joy
 Of my free spirit's whiteness; for e'en now
 Th' embodied hideousness of crime doth seem
 Before me glaring out.—Why, I saw *thee*,
 Thy foot upon an aged warrior's breast,
 Trampling our nature's last convulsive heavings.
 —And thou—*thy* sword—Oh, valiant chief!—is yet
 Red from the noble stroke which pierced, at once,
 A mother and the babe, whose little life
 Was from her bosom drawn!—Immortal deeds
 For bards to hymn!

GUIDO. (*aside.*) I look upon his mien,
 And waver.—Can it be?—My boyish heart
 Deem'd him so noble once!—Away, weak thoughts!
 Why should I shrink, as if the guilt were *mine*,
 From his proud glance?

PRO. Oh, thou dissembler!—thou,
 So skill'd to clothe with virtue's generous flush
 The hollow cheek of cold hypocrisy,
 That, with thy guilt made manifest, I can scarce
 Believe thee guilty!—look on me, and say
 Whose was the secret warning voice, that saved
 De Couci with his bands, to join our foes,
 And forge new fetters for th' indignant land?
 Whose was *this* treachery? (*Shows him papers.*)
 Who hath promised here,
 (Belike to appease the manès of the dead,)

At midnight to unfold Palermo's gates,
And welcome in the foe?—Who hath done this,
But thou, a tyrant's friend?

RAI. Who hath done this?
Father!—if I may call thee by that name—
Look, with thy piercing eye, on those whose smiles
Were masks that hid their daggers.—*There*, per-
chance,
May lurk what loves not light too strong. For me,
I know but this—there needs no deep research
To prove the truth—that murderers may be traitors
Ev'n to each other.

PRO. (*to Montalba.*) His unaltering cheek
Still vividly doth hold its natural hue,
And his eye quails not;—Is this innocence?

MON. No! 'tis th' unshrinking hardihood of crime.
—Thou bear'st a gallant mien!—But where is she
Whom thou hast barter'd fame and life to save,
The fair Provençal maid?—What! know'st thou not
That this alone were guilt, to death allied?
Was't not our law that he who spared a foe,
(And is she not of that detested race?)
Should thenceforth be amongst us *as* a foe?
—Where hast thou borne her?—speak!

RAI. That heaven, whose eye
Burns up thy soul with its far-searching glance,
Is with her; she is safe.

PRO. And by that word
Thy doom is seal'd.—Oh God! that I had died

(Belike to appease the manes of the dead.)

Before this bitter hour, in the full strength
And glory of my heart!

(Constance *enters, and rushes to Raimond.*)

CONSTANCE. Oh! art thou found?
—But yet, to find thee thus!—Chains, chains for *thee*!
My brave, my noble love!—Off with these bonds;
Let him be free as air:—for I am come
To be your victim now.

RAI. Death has no pang
More keen than this.—Oh! wherefore art thou here?
I could have died so calmly, deeming thee
Saved, and at peace.

CON. At peace!—And thou hast thought
Thus poorly of my love!—But woman's breast
Hath strength to suffer too.—Thy father sits
On this tribunal; Raimond, which is he?

RAI. My father!—who hath lull'd thy gentle heart
With that false hope?—Beloved! gaze around—
See, if thine eye can trace a father's soul
In the dark looks bent on us.

CON. (*After earnestly examining the countenances of
the judges, falls at the feet of Procida.*)

Thou art he!

Nay, turn thou not away!—for I beheld
Thy proud lip quiver, and a watery mist
Pass o'er thy troubled eye; and then I knew
Thou wert his father!—Spare him!—take *my* life!
In truth a worthless sacrifice for his,

But yet mine all.—Oh! *he* hath still to run
A long bright race of glory.

RAI. Constance, peace!

I look upon thee, and my failing heart
Is as a broken reed.

CON. (*still addressing Procida.*) Oh, yet relent!
If 'twas his crime to rescue *me*, behold
I come to be the atonement! Let him live
To crown thine age with honour.—In thy heart
There's a deep conflict; but great nature pleads
With an o'ermastering voice, and thou wilt yield!
—Thou *art* his father!

PRO. (*after a pause.*) Maiden, thou'rt deceived!
I am as calm as that dead pause of nature
Ere the full thunder bursts.—A judge is not
Father or friend. Who calls this man my son?
—*My* son!—Ay! thus his mother proudly smiled—
But she was noble!—Traitors stand alone,
Loosed from all ties.—Why should I trifle thus?
—Bear her away!

RAI. (*starting forward.*) And whither?

MON. Unto death.

Why should she live when all her race have perish'd?

CON. (*sinking into the arms of Raimond.*)

Raimond, farewell!—Oh! when thy star hath risen
To its bright noon, forget not, best beloved,
I died for thee!

RAI. High heaven! thou seest these things;
And yet endur'st them!—Shalt thou die for me,
Purest and loveliest being?—but our fate

May not divide us long.—Her cheek is cold—
 Her deep blue eyes are closed—Should this be death!
 —If thus, there yet were mercy!—Father, father!
 Is thy heart human?

PRO. Bear her hence, I say!
 Why must my soul be torn?

(Anselmo enters, holding a Crucifix.)

ANSELMO. Now, by this sign
 Of heaven's prevailing love, ye shall not harm
 One ringlet of her head.—How! is there not
 Enough of blood upon your burthen'd souls?
 Will not the visions of your midnight couch
 Be wild and dark enough, but ye must heap
 Crime upon crime?—Be ye content:—your dreams,
 Your councils, and your banquettings, will yet
 Be haunted by the voice which doth not sleep,
 E'en tho' this maid be spared!—Constance, look up!
 Thou shalt not die.

RAI. Oh! death e'en now hath veil'd
 The light of her soft beauty.—Wake, my love;
 Wake at my voice!

PRO. Anselmo, lead her hence,
 And let her live, but never meet my sight.
 —Begone!—My heart will burst.

RAI. One last embrace!
 —Again life's rose is opening on her cheek;
 Yet must we part.—So love is crush'd on earth!
 But there are brighter worlds!—Farewell, farewell!
(He gives her to the care of Anselmo.)

CON. (*slowly recovering.*) There was a voice which
call'd me.—Am I not
A spirit freed from earth?—Have I not pass'd
The bitterness of death?

ANS. Oh, haste away!

CON. Yes! Raimond calls me.—He too is released
From his cold bondage.—We are free at last,
And all is well—Away! (*She is led out by Anselmo.*)

RAI. The pang is o'er,
And I have but to die.

MON. Now, Procida,
Comes thy great task. Wake! summon to thine aid
All thy deep soul's commanding energies;
For thou—a chief among us—must pronounce
The sentence of thy son. It rests with thee.

PRO. Ha! ha!—Men's hearts should be of softer
mould
Than in the elder time.—Fathers could doom
Their children *then* with an unfaltering voice,
And we must tremble thus!—Is it not said,
That nature grows degenerate, earth being now
So full of days?

MON. Rouse up thy mighty heart.

PRO. Ay, thou say'st right. There yet are souls
which tower
As landmarks to mankind.—Well, what's the task?
—There is a man to be condemn'd, you say?
Is he then guilty?
ALL. Thus we deem of him
With one accord.

PRO. And hath he nought to plead?

RAI. Nought but a soul unstain'd.

PRO. Why, that is little.

Stains on the soul are but as conscience deems them,
And conscience—may be sear'd.—But, for this sentence!

—Was 't not the penalty imposed on man,
E'en from creation's dawn, that he must die?

—It was : thus making guilt a sacrifice
Unto eternal justice ; and we but

Obeys heaven's mandate, when we cast dark souls
To th' elements from amongst us.—Be it so !

Such be *his* doom !—I have said. Ay, now my heart
Is girt with adamant, whose cold weight doth press
Its gaspings down.—Off ! let me breathe in freedom !
—Mountains are on my breast ! (*He sinks back.*

MON. Guards, bear the prisoner
Back to his dungeon.

RAI. Father ! oh, look up ;
Thou art my father still !

GUIDO (*leaving the Tribunal, throws himself on the neck
of Raimond.*) Oh ! Raimond, Raimond !
If it should be that I have wrong'd thee, say
Thou dost forgive me.

RAI. Friend of my young days,
So may all-pitying heaven ! (*Raimond is led out.*

PRO. Whose voice was that ?
Where is he ?—gone ?—now I may breathe once more
In the free air of heaven. Let us away.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE I.—*A Prison, dimly lighted.*

Raimond *sleeping*. Procida *enters*.

PROCIDA. (*gazing upon him earnestly.*) Can he then sleep?—Th' o'ershadowing night hath wrapt Earth, at her stated hours—the stars have set Their burning watch; and all things hold their course Of wakefulness and rest; yet hath not sleep Sat on mine eyelids since—but this avails not!—And thus *he* slumbers!—"Why, this mien doth seem

"As if its soul were but one lofty thought

"Of an immortal destiny!"—his brow

Is calm as waves whereon the midnight heavens

Are imaged silently.—Wake, Raimond, wake!

Thy rest is deep.

RAIMOND. (*starting up.*) My father!—Wherefore here? I am prepared to die, yet would I not Fall by *thy* hand!

PRO. 'Twas not for *this* I came.

RAI. Then wherefore?—and upon thy lofty brow Why burns the troubled flush?

PRO. Perchance 'tis shame.

Yes ! it may well be shame !—for I have striven
 With nature's feebleness, and been o'erpower'd.
 —Howe'er it be, 'tis not for *thee* to gaze,
 Noting it thus. Rise, let me loose thy chains.
 Arise, and follow me ; but let thy step
 Fall without sound on earth : I have prepared
 The means for thy escape.

RAI. What ! *thou* ! the austere,
 The inflexible Procida ! hast *thou* done this,
 Deeming me guilty still ?

PRO. Upbraid me not ?
 It is even so. There have been nobler deeds
 By Roman fathers done,—but I am weak.
 Therefore, again I say, arise ! and haste,
 For the night wanes. Thy fugitive course must be
 To realms beyond the deep ; so let us part
 In silence, and for ever.

RAI. Let *him* fly
 Who holds no deep asylum in his breast,
 Wherein to shelter from the scoffs of men !
 —I can sleep calmly here.

PRO. Art thou in love
 With death and infamy, that so thy choice
 Is made, lost boy ! when freedom courts thy grasp ?

RAI. Father ! to set th' irrevocable seal
 Upon that shame wherewith ye have branded me,
 There needs but flight.—What should I bear from
 this,
 My native land ?—A blighted name, to rise

And part me, with its dark remembrances,
For ever from the sunshine!—O'er my soul
Bright shadowings of a nobler destiny
Float in dim beauty through the gloom; but here,
On earth, my hopes are closed.

PRO. *Thy* hopes are closed!
And what were they to mine?—Thou wilt not fly!
Why, let all traitors flock to thee, and learn
How proudly guilt can talk!—Let fathers rear
Their offspring henceforth, as the free wild birds
Foster their young; when these can mount alone,
Dissolving nature's bonds—why should it not
Be so with us?

RAI. Oh, Father!—Now I feel
What high prerogatives belong to death.
He hath a deep, tho' voiceless eloquence,
To which I leave my cause. “His solemn veil
“Doth with mysterious beauty clothe our virtues;
“And in its vast, oblivious folds, for ever
“Give shelter to our faults.”—When I am gone,
The mists of passion which have dimm'd my
name

Will melt like day-dreams; and my memory then
Will be—not what it *should* have been—for I
Must pass without my fame—but yet, unstain'd
As a clear morning dew-drop. Oh! the grave
Hath rights inviolate as a sanctuary's,
And they should be my own!

PRO. Now, by just heaven,
I will not thus be tortured!—Were my heart

But of thy guilt or innocence assured,
 I could be calm again. "But, in this wild
 "Suspense,—this conflict and vicissitude
 "Of opposite feelings and convictions—What!
 "Hath it been mine to temper and to bend
 "All spirits to my purpose; have I raised
 "With a severe and passionless energy,
 "From the dread mingling of their elements,
 "Storms which have rock'd the earth?—And shall I
 now
 "Thus fluctuate, as a feeble reed; the scorn
 "And plaything of the winds?"—Look on me, boy!
 Guilt never dared to meet these eyes, and keep
 Its heart's dark secret close.—Oh, pitying heaven!
 Speak to my soul with some dread oracle,
 And tell me which is truth.

RAI. I will not plead.
 I will not call th' Omnipotent to attest
 My innocence: No, father, in thy heart
 I know my birthright shall be soon restored;
 Therefore I look to death, and bid thee speed
 The great absolver.

PRO. Oh! my son, my son!
 We will not part in wrath!—the sternest hearts,
 Within their proud and guarded fastnesses,
 Hide something still, round which their tendrils cling
 With a close grasp, unknown to those who dress
 Their love in smiles. And such wert thou to me!
 The all which taught me that my soul was cast
 In nature's mould.—And I must now hold on.

My desolate course alone!—Why, be it thus!
He that doth guide a nation's star, should dwell
High o'er the clouds in regal solitude,
Sufficient to himself.

RAI. Yet, on that summit,
When with her bright wings glory shadows thee,
Forget not him who coldly sleeps beneath,
Yet might have soar'd as high!

PRO. No, fear thou not!
Thou'lt be remember'd long. The canker-worm
O'th' heart is ne'er forgotten.

RAI. “Oh! not thus—
I would not *thus* be thought of.”

PRO. Let me deem
Again that thou art base!—for thy bright looks,
Thy glorious mien of fearlessness and truth,
Then would not haunt me as th' avenging powers
Follow'd the parricide.—Farewell, farewell!
I have no tears.—Oh! thus thy mother look'd,
When, with a sad, yet half-triumphant smile,
All radiant with deep meaning, from her death-bed
She gave thee to my arms.

RAI. Now death has lost
His sting, since thou believ'st me innocent.

PRO. (*wildly*) Thou innocent!—Am I thy murderer
then?
Away! I tell thee thou hast made my name
A scorn to men!—No! I will *not* forgive thee;
A traitor!—What! the blood of Procida
Filling a traitor's veins!—Let the earth drink it;

Thou wouldst receive our foes !—but they shall meet
From thy perfidious lips a welcome, cold
As death can make it.—Go, prepare thy soul !

RAI. Father ! yet hear me !

PRO. No ! thou'rt skill'd to make
E'en shame look fair.—Why should I linger thus ?

*(Going to leave the prison he turns back
for a moment.)*

If there be aught—if aught—for which thou need'st
Forgiveness—not of me, but that dread power
From whom no heart is veil'd—delay thou not
Thy prayer :—Time hurries on.

RAI. I am prepared.

PRO. 'Tis well. *[Exit Procida.]*

RAI. Men talk of torture !—Can they wreak
Upon the sensitive and shrinking frame,
Half the mind bears, and lives ?—My spirit feels
Bewilder'd ; on its powers this twilight gloom
Hangs like a weight of earth.—It should be morn ;
Why, then, perchance, a beam of heaven's bright sun
Hath pierced, ere now, the grating of my dungeon,
Telling of hope and mercy ! *[Exit into an inner cell.]*

SCENE II.—A Street of Palermo.

Many Citizens assembled.

1 CITIZEN. The morning breaks ; his time is al-
most come :
Will he be led this way ?

2 Crr. Ay, so 'tis said,
To die before that gate thro' which he purposed
The foe should enter in.

3 Crr. 'Twas a vile plot !
And yet I would my hands were pure as his
From the deep stain of blood. Didst hear the sounds
I'th' air last night ?

2 Crr. Since the great work of slaughter,
Who hath not heard them duly, at those hours
Which should be silent ?

3 Crr. Oh ! the fearful mingling,
The terrible mimicry of human voices,
In every sound which to the heart doth speak
Of woe and death.

2 Crr. Ay, there was woman's shrill
And piercing cry ; and the low feeble wail
Of dying infants ; and the half-suppress'd
Deep groan of man in his last agonies !
And now and then there swell'd upon the breeze
Strange, savage bursts of laughter, wilder far
Than all the rest.

1 Crr. Of our own fate, perchance
These awful midnight wailings may be deem'd
An ominous prophecy.—Should France regain
Her power amongst us, doubt not, we shall have
Stern reckoners to account with.—Hark !

(The sound of trumpets is heard at distance.)

2 Crr. 'Twas but
A rushing of the breeze.

3 CIT. E'en now, 'tis said,
The hostile bands approach.

(The sound is heard gradually drawing nearer.)

2 CIT. Again!—that sound
Was no illusion. Nearer yet it swells—
They come, they come!

Procida enters.

PROCIDA. The foe is at your gates;
But hearts and hands prepared shall meet his onset:
Why are ye loitering here?

CITS. My lord, we came—

PRO. Think ye I know not wherefore?—'twas to see
A fellow-being die!—Ay, 'tis a sight
Man loves to look on, and the tenderest hearts
Recoil, and yet withdraw not, from the scene.
For *this* ye came—What! is our nature fierce,
Or is there that in mortal agony,
From which the soul, exulting in its strength,
Doth learn immortal lessons?—Hence, and arm
Ere the night dews descend, ye will have seen
Enough of death; for this must be a day
Of battle!—'Tis the hour which troubled souls
Delight in, for its rushing storms are wings
Which bear them up!—Arm, arm! 'tis for your homes,
And all that lends them loveliness—Away!

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III.—*Prison of Raimond.*

Raimond. Anselmo.

RAIMOND. And Constance then is safe!—Heaven
bless thee, father;
Good angels bear such comfort.

ANSELMO. I have found
A safe asylum for thine honour'd love,
Where she may dwell until serener days,
With Saint Rosolia's gentlest daughters; those
Whose hallow'd office is to tend the bed
Of pain and death, and soothe the parting soul
With their soft hymns: and therefore are they call'd
“Sisters of Mercy.”

RAI. Oh! that name, my Constance,
Befits thee well! E'en in our happiest days,
There was a depth of tender pensiveness,
Far in thine eyes' dark azure, speaking ever
Of pity and mild grief.—Is she at peace?

ANS. Alas! what should I say,

RAI. Why did I ask?
Knowing the deep and full devotedness
Of her young heart's affections?—Oh! the thought
Of my untimely fate will haunt her dreams,
Which should have been so tranquil!—And her soul,
Whose strength was but the lofty gift of love,
Even unto death will sicken.

ANS. All that faith
Can yield of comfort, shall assuage her woes;

And still, whate'er betide, the light of heaven
Rests on her gentle heart. But thou, my son!
Is thy young spirit master'd, and prepared
For nature's fearful and mysterious change?

—RAI. Ay, father! of my brief remaining task
The least part is to die?—And yet the cup
Of life still mantled brightly to my lips,
Crown'd with that sparkling bubble, whose proud
name

Is—glory!—Oh! my soul, from boyhood's morn,
Hath nursed such mighty dreams!—It was my hope
To leave a name, whose echo, from the abyss
Of time should rise, and float upon the winds,
Into the far hereafter: there to be
A trumpet-sound, a voice from the deep tomb,
Murmuring—awake!—Arise!—But this is past!
Erewhile, and it had seem'd enough of shame,
To sleep *forgotten* in the dust—but now
—Oh God!—the undying record of my grave
Will be,—Here sleeps a traitor!—One, whose crime
Was—to deem brave men might find nobler weapons
Than the cold murderer's dagger!

ANS. Oh, my son,
Subdue these troubled thoughts! Thou wouldst not
change
Thy lot for theirs, o'er whose dark dreams will hang
The avenging shadows, which the blood-stain'd soul
Doth conjure from the death!

RAI. Thou'rt right. I would not.
Yet 'tis a weary task to school the heart,

Ere years or griefs have tamed its fiery spirit
 Into that still and passive fortitude,
 Which is but learn'd from suffering.—Would the hour
 To hush these passionate throbbings were at hand!

ANS. It will not be to-day. Hast thou not heard—
 —But no—the rush, the trampling, and the stir
 Of this great city, arming in her haste,
 Pierce not these dungeon-depths.—The foe hath
 reach'd

Our gates, and all Palermo's youth, and all
 Her warrior-men, are marshall'd, and gone forth
 In that high hope which makes realities,
 To the red field. Thy father leads them on.

RAI. (*starting up.*) They are gone forth! my father
 leads them on!

All, all Palermo's youth!—No! *one* is left,
 Shut out from glory's race!—They are gone forth!
 —Ay! now the soul of battle is abroad,
 It burns upon the air!—The joyous winds
 Are tossing warrior-plumes, the proud white foam
 Of battle's roaring billows!—On my sight
 The vision bursts—it maddens! 'tis the flash,
 The lightning-shock of lances, and the cloud
 Of rushing arrows, and the broad full blaze
 Of helmets in the sun!—The very steed
 With his majestic rider glorying shares
 The hour's stern joy, and waves his floating mane
 As a triumphant banner!—Such things are
 Even now—and I am here!

ANS. Alas, be calm!

To the same grave ye press, —thou that dost pine
Beneath a weight of chains, and they that rule
The fortunes of the fight.

RAI.

Ay ! *Thou* canst feel

The calm thou wouldst impart, for unto thee
All men alike, the warrior and the slave,
Seem, as thou say st, but pilgrims, pressing on
To the same bourne.—Yet call it not the same !
Their graves, who fall in this day's fight, will be
As altars to their country, visited
By fathers with their children, bearing wreaths,
And chaunting hymns in honour of the dead :
Will mine be such ?

Vittoria rushes in wildly, as if pursued.

VITTORIA.

Anselmo ! art thou found ?

Haste, haste, or all is lost ! Perchance thy voice,
Whereby they deem heaven speaks, thy lifted cross,
And prophet-mien, may stay the fugitives,
Or shame them back to die.

ANS.

The fugitives !

What words are these ?—the sons of Sicily
Fly not before the foe !

VIT.

That I should say.

It is too true !

ANS.

And thou—thou bleedest, lady !

VIT. Peace ! heed not me, when Sicily is lost !

I stood upon the walls, and watched our bands,
As, with their ancient, royal banner spread,
Onward they march'd. The combat was begun,

The fiery impulse given, and valiant men
 Had seal'd their freedom with their blood—when lo!
 That false Alberti led his recreant vassals
 To join th' invader's host.

RAI. His country's curse
 Rest on the slave for ever!

VIT. Then distrust
 E'en of their nobler leaders, and dismay,
 That swift contagion, on Palermo's bands
 Came, like a deadly blight. They fled!—Oh shame!
 E'en now they fly!—Ay, thro' the city gates
 They rush, as if all Etna's burning streams
 Pursued their winged steps!

RAI. Thou hast not named
 Their chief—Di Procida—*He doth not fly*

VIT. No! like a kingly lion in the toils,
 Daring the hunters yet, he proudly strives
 But all in vain! The few that breast the storm,
 With Guido and Montalba, by his side,
 Fight but for graves upon the battle-field.

RAI. And I am *here*!—Shall there be power, O
 God!

In the roused energies of fierce despair,
 To burst my heart—and not to rend my chains?
 Oh, for one moment of the thunderbolt
 To set the strong man free!

VIT. (*after gazing upon him earnestly.*) Why, 'twere
 a deed
 Worthy the fame and blessing of all time.
 To loose thy bonds, thou son of Procida!

Thou art no traitor:—from thy kindled brow
Looks out thy lofty soul!—Arise! go forth!
And rouse the noble heart of Sicily
Unto high deeds again. Anselmo, haste;
Unbind him! Let my spirit still prevail,
Ere I depart—for the strong hand of death
Is on me now.— (*She sinks back against a pillar.*)

ANS. Oh heaven! the life-blood streams
Fast from thy heart—thy troubled eyes grow dim!
Who hath done this?

VIT. Before the gates I stood,
And in the name of him, the loved and lost,
With whom I soon shall be, all vainly strove
To stay the shameful flight. Then from the foe,
Fraught with my summons to his viewless home,
Came the fleet shaft which pierced me.

ANS. Yet, oh yet,
It may not be too late. Help, help!

VIT. Away!
Bright is the hour which brings me liberty!
; will not stay—it is all darkness now;
Attendants enter.

Haste, be those fetters riven!—Unbar the gates,
And set the captive free!
(*The Attendants seem to hesitate.*)

Know ye not her
Who should have worn your country's diadem?

ATT. Oh, lady, we obey.

(*They take off Raimond's chains. He springs
up exultingly.*)

RAI. Is this no dream?
 —Mount, eagle! thou art free!—Shall I then die,
 Not midst the mockery of insulting crowds,
 But on the field of banners, where the brave
 Are striving for an immortality?
 —It is e'en so!—Now for bright arms of proof,
 A helm, a keen-edged falchion, and e'en yet
 My father may be saved!

VIT. Away, be strong!
 And let thy battle-word, to rule the storm,
 Be—*Conradin!* (He rushes out.

Oh! for one hour of life
 To hear that name blent with th' exulting shout
 Of victory!—'t will not be!—A mightier power
 Doth summon me away.

ANS. To purer worlds
 Raise thy last thoughts in hope.

VIT. Yes! he is there,
 All glorious in his beauty!—Conradin!
 Death parted us—and death shall re-unite!
 —He will not stay—it is all darkness now;
 Night gathers o'er my spirit.

(She dies.

ANS. She is gone

It is an awful hour which stills the heart
 That beat so proudly once.—Have mercy, heaven!

(He kneels beside her.

(The scene closes.)

SCENE IV.—*Before the Gates of Palermo.*

Sicilians flying tumultuously towards the Gates.

VOICES. (*without.*) Montjoy! Montjoy! St. Denis
for Anjou!

Provençals, on!

SIC. Fly, fly, or all is lost!

(*Raimond appears in the gateway, armed, and carrying
a banner.*)

RAIMOND. Back, back, I say! ye men of Sicily!
All is not lost! Oh shame!—A few brave hearts
In such a cause, ere now, have set their breasts
Against the rush of thousands, and sustain'd,
And made the shock recoil.—Ay, man, free man,
Still to be called so, hath achieved such deeds
As heaven and earth have marvell'd at; and souls,
Whose spark yet slumbers with the days to come,
Shall burn to hear: transmitting brightly thus
Freedom from race to race!—Back! or prepare,
Amidst your hearths, your bowers, your very shrines,
To bleed and die in vain!—Turn, follow me!
Conradin, Conradin!—for Sicily
His spirit fights!—Remember Conradin!

(*They begin to rally around him.*
Ay, this is well!—Now follow me, and charge!

(*The Provençals rush in, but are repulsed by the
Sicilians.*

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—*Part of the Field of Battle.*

Montalba enters wounded, and supported by Raimond, whose face is concealed by his helmet.

RAIMOND. Here rest thee, warrior.

MONTALBA. Rest, ay, death is rest,
And such will soon be mine—But, thanks to thee,
I shall not die a captive. Brave Sicilian!
These lips are all unused to soothing words,
Or I should bless the valour which hath won
For my last hour, the proud free solitude
Wherewith my soul would gird itself.—Thy name?

RAI. 'Twill be no music to thine ear, Montalba.
Gaze—read it thus! (He lifts the visor of his helmet.

MON. Raimond di Procida!

RAI. Thou hast pursued me with a bitter hate,
But fare thee well! Heaven's peace be with thy soul!
I must away—One glorious effort more
And this proud field is won!

[Exit Raimond.

MON. Am I thus humbled?
How my heart sinks within me! But 'tis death
(And he can tame the mightiest) hath subdued
My towering nature thus!—Yet is he welcome!
That youth—twas in his pride he rescued me!
I was his deadliest foe, and thus he proved
His fearless scorn. Ha! ha! but he shall fail
To melt me into womanish feebleness.

*There I still baffle him—the grave shall seal—
My lips for ever—mortal shall not hear—
Montalba say—"forgive!"—* (He dies.)

(The Scene closes.)

SCENE VI. *Another part of the Field.*

Procida. Guido. *And other Sicilians.*

PROCIDA. The day is ours; but he, the brave unknown,

Who turn'd the tide of battle; he whose path
Was victory—who hath seen him?

Alberti is brought in wounded, and fettered.

ALBERTI. Procida!

PRO. Be silent, traitor!—Bear him from my sight
Unto your deepest dungeons.

ALB. In the grave
A nearer home awaits me.—Yet one word
Ere my voice fail—thy son—

PRO. Speak, speak!

ALB. Thy son
Knows not a thought of guilt. That trait'rous plot
Was mine alone. *(He is led away.)*

PRO. Attest it, earth and heaven!
My son is guiltless!—Hear it, Sicily!
The blood of Procida is noble still!

—My son!—He lives, he lives!—His voice shall
speak

Forgiveness to his sire!—His name shall cast
Its brightness o'er my soul!

GUIDO.

Oh, day of joy!

The brother of my heart is worthy still

The lofty name he bears.

Anselmo enters.

PRO.

Anselmo, welcome!

In a glad hour we meet, for know, my son

Is guiltless.

ANS.

And victorious! by his arm

All hath been rescued.

PRO.

How! th' unknown—

ANS.

Was he!

Thy noble Raimond! By Vittoria's hand

Freed from his bondage in that awful hour

When all was flight and terror.

PRO.

Now my cup

Of joy too brightly mantles!—Let me press

My warrior to a father's heart—and die;

For life hath nought beyond!—Why comes he not?

Anselmo, lead me to my valiant boy!

ANS. Temper this proud delight.

PRO.

What means that look

He hath not fallen?

ANS.

He lives.

PRO.

Away, away!

Bid the wide city with triumphal pomp
 Prepare to greet her victor. Let this hour
 Atone for all his wrongs !— [Exeunt.]

SCENE VII.—*Garden of a Convent.*

Raimond is led in wounded, leaning on Attendants.

RAIMOND. Bear me to no dull couch, but let me
 die

In the bright face of nature !—Lift my helm,
 That I may look on heaven.

1 ATT. (to 2 ATT.) Lay him to rest
 On this green sunny bank, and I will call
 Some holy sister to his aid ; but thou
 Return unto the field, for high-born men
 There need the peasant's aid. [Exit 2 Att.]

(to Raimond) Here gentler hands
 Shall tend thee, warrior ; for in these retreats
 They dwell, whose vows devote them to the care
 Of all that suffer. May'st thou live to bless them !
 [Exit 1 Att.]

RAI. Thus have I wish'd to die !—'Twas a proud
 strife !

My father bless'd th' unknown who rescued him,
 (Bless'd him, alas ! *because unknown !*) and Guido,
 Beside me bravely struggling, call'd aloud,
 "Noble Sicilian, on !" Oh ! had they deem'd

'Twas I who led that rescue, they had spurn'd
Mine aid, tho' 'twas deliverance; and their looks
Had fallen, like blights, upon me.—There is one,
Whose eye ne'er turn'd on mine, but its blue light
Grew softer, trembling thro' the dewy mist
Raised by deep tenderness!—Oh might the soul
Set in that eye, shine on me ere I perish!
—Is't not her voice?

Constance enters, speaking to a Nun, who turns into another path.

CONSTANCE. Oh! happy they, kind sister,
Whom thus ye tend; for it is theirs to fall
With brave men side by side, when the roused heart
Beats proudly to the last!—There are high souls
Whose hope was such a death, and 'tis denied!
(*She approaches Raimond.*) Young warrior, is there
aught—*thou* here, my Raimond!
Thou here—and thus!—Oh! is this joy or woe?

RAI. Joy, be it joy, my own, my blessed love,
E'en on the grave's dim verge!—yes! it is joy!
My Constance! victors have been crown'd, ere now,
With the green shining laurel, when their brows
Wore death's own impress—and it may be thus
E'en yet, with me!—They freed me, when the foe
Had half prevail'd, and I have proudly earn'd,
With my heart's dearest blood, the meed to die
Within thine arms.

CON. Oh! speak not thus—to die!

These wounds may yet be closed.

(She attempts to bind his wounds.)

Look on me, love !

Why, there is *more* than life in thy glad mien,
'T is full of hope ! and from thy kindled eye
Breaks e'en unwonted light, whose ardent ray
Seems born to be immortal !

RAI. 'T is e'en so !

The parting soul doth gather all her fires
Around her ; all her glorious hopes, and dreams,
And burning aspirations, to illumine
The shadowy dimness of th' untrodden path
Which lies before her ; and, encircled thus,
Awhile she sits in dying eyes, and thence
Sends forth her bright farewell. Thy gentle cares
Are vain, and yet I bless them.

CON. Say, not vain ;

The dying look not thus. We shall not part !

RAI. I have seen death ere now, and known him
wear

Full many a changeful aspect.

CON. Oh ! but none

Radiant as thine, my warrior !—Thou wilt live !
Look round thee !—all is sunshine—is not this
A smiling world ?

RAI. Ay, gentlest love, a world
Of joyous beauty and magnificence,
Almost too fair to leave !—Yet must we tame
Our ardent hearts to this !—Oh, weep thou not !

There is no home for liberty, or love,
Beneath these festal skies !—Be not deceived ;
My way lies far beyond !—I shall be soon
That viewless thing which, with its mortal weeds
Casting off meaner passions, yet, we trust,
Forgets not how to love !

CON. And must this be ?
Heaven, thou art merciful !—Oh ! bid our souls
Depart together !

RAI. Constance ! there is strength
Within thy gentle heart, which hath been proved
Nobly, for me :—Arouse it once again !
Thy grief unmans me—and I fain would meet
That which approaches, as a brave man yields
With proud submission to a mightier foe.
—It is upon me now !

CON. I will be calm.
Let thy head rest upon my bosom, Raimond,
And I will so suppress its quick deep sobs,
They shall but rock thee to thy rest. There is
A world, (ay, let us seek it !) where no blight
Falls on the beautiful rose of youth, and there
I shall be with thee soon !

*Procida and Anselmo enter. Procida on seeing
Raimond starts back.*

ANSELMO. Lift up thy head,
Brave youth, exultingly ! for lo ! thine hour
Of glory comes !—Oh ! doth it come too late ?
E'en now the false Alberti hath confess'd

That guilty plot, for which thy life was doom'd
To be th' atonement.

RAI. 'Tis enough ! Rejoice,
Rejoice, my Constance ! for I leave a name
O'er which thou may'st weep proudly ! (*He sinks back.*
To thy breast

Fold me yet closer, for an icy dart
Hath touch'd my veins.

CON. And must thou leave me, Raimond ?
Alas ! thine eye grows dim—its wandering glance
Is full of dreams.

RAI. Haste, haste, and tell my father
I was no traitor !

PROCIDA. (*rushing forward.*) To that father's heart
Return, forgiving all thy wrongs, return !
Speak to me, Raimond !—Thou wert ever kind,
And brave, and gentle ! Say that all the past
Shall be forgiven ! That word from none but thee
My lips e'er ask'd.—Speak to me once, my boy,
My pride, my hope !—And is it with thee thus ?
Look on me yet !—Oh ! must this woe be borne ?

RAI. Off with this weight of chains ! it is not meet
For a crown'd conqueror !—Hark, the trumpet's voice !

(*A sound of triumphant music is heard, gradually
approaching.*)

Is 't not a thrilling call ?—What drowsy spell
Benumbs me thus ?—Hence ! I am free again !
Now swell your festal strains, the field is won !
Sing me to glorious dreams. (*He dies.*)

ANS. The strife is past.
There fled a noble spirit !

CON. Hush ! he sleeps—
Disturb him not !

ANS. Alas ! this is no sleep
From which the eye doth radiantly uncloze :
Bow down thy soul, for earthly hope is o'er !

(*The music continues approaching.* Guido enters, with Citizens and Soldiers.

GUIDO. The shrines are deck'd, the festive torches
blaze—

Where is our brave deliverer ?—We are come
To crown Palermo's victor !

ANS. Ye come late.
The voice of human praise doth send no echo
Into the world of spirits. (*The music ceases.*

PRO. (*after a pause.*) Is this dust
I look on—Raimond !—'tis but sleep—a smile
On his pale cheek sits proudly. Raimond, wake !
Oh, God ! and this was his triumphant day !
My son, my injured son !

CON. (*starting.*) Art thou his father ?
I know thee now.—Hence ! with thy dark stern eye,
And thy cold heart !—Thou canst not wake him now !
Away ! he will not answer but to me,
For none like me hath loved him ! He is mine !
Ye shall not rend him from me.

PRO. Oh ! he *knew*
Thy love, poor maid !—Shrink from me now no more !
He knew *thy* heart—but who shall tell him now

The depth, th' intenseness, and the agony,
Of my suppress'd affection?—I have learn'd
All his high worth in time—to deck his grave!
Is there not power in the strong spirit's woe
To force an answer from the viewless world
Of the departed?—Raimond!—Speak! forgive!
Raimond! my victor, my deliverer, hear!
Why, what a world is this!—Truth ever bursts
On the dark soul too late: And glory crowns
Th' unconscious dead! And an hour comes to break
The mightiest hearts!—My son! my son! is this
A day of triumph?—Ay, for thee alone!

(He throws himself upon the body of Raimond.)

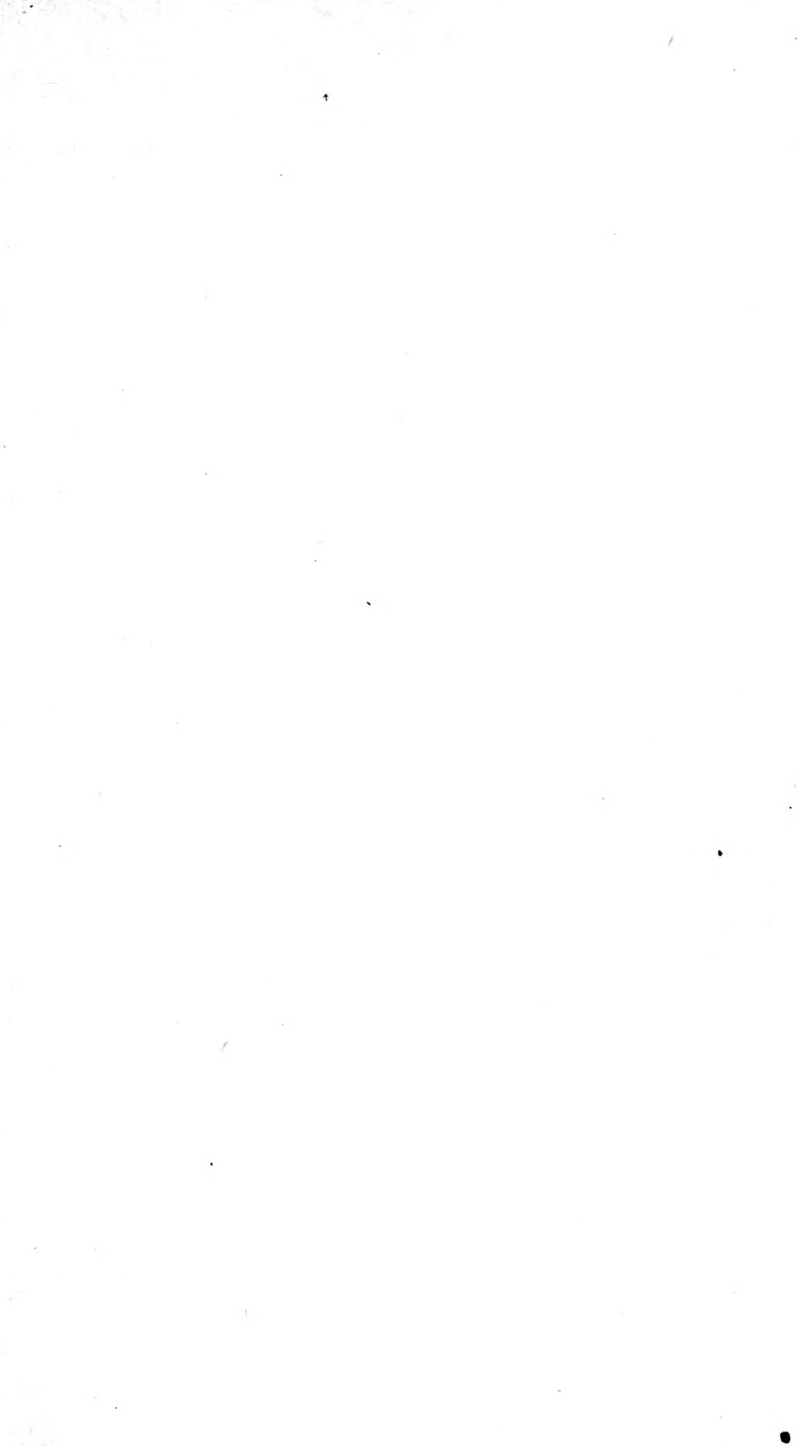
[Curtain falls.]

THE END.

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